

THE ROLE OF AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL IN THE
RETENTION OF NOVICE TEACHERS:
A MICROPOLITICAL CASE STUDY

A Dissertation

by

ELIZABETH ANN GRENINGER

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2012

Major Subject: Educational Administration

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Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

The Role of an Elementary School Principal in the Retention of Novice Teachers:

A Micropolitical Case Study. (May 2012)

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Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Terah Venzant Chambers

Teachers are leaving the education profession at alarming rates and the attrition of teachers has become a serious issue for many schools and districts around the country. The purpose of this study was to investigate the retention and attrition patterns in one elementary school through the lens of micropolitical theory; in particular, principal decision-making processes, leadership activities, and the relationship between principal and teachers were studied. This qualitative, single case exploration included classroom observations, document analysis, and focus group and individual interviews with one principal, seven novice teachers, and one lead mentor. The data was analyzed using categorical aggregation and a constant comparative analysis. Study findings provided evidence that a negative micropolitical state was present at the school under study, including an absence of shared values and goals, lack of positive interpersonal relations, and lack of collegiality, all of which served to discourage the growth of novice teachers as developing professionals. Teacher perceptions revealed that they were less than satisfied with their chosen profession, particularly lacking contentment with the principal leadership.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my late mother and veteran teacher, Sara Welch. My mom taught me the value of education and the importance of treating each and every student as your own child. She and my father, Richard Welch, instilled in me a strong work ethic and the importance of making a difference in your chosen career.

I also dedicate my work in the field of education to my sweet daughter, Kinsey Paige. I want Kinsey to grow up with the best educational opportunities before her and I believe that our public education system can meet the needs of all of our children. Because I have faith in teachers, principals, and schools, I have devoted my career to making a difference in the quality of our schools.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Terah Venzant Chambers, and my committee members, Dr. Jim Scheurich, Dr. Gwen Webb-Hasan, and Dr. Deborah Kerr, for their constant guidance and support. I truly appreciate the direction and advice offered by Dr. Chambers throughout the writing process.

I cannot express in words the immense love and appreciation I have for my husband, Sean, who has done everything in his power to support me through this phase of our life. He has made many sacrifices to ensure that things at home were under control while I worked early mornings, late nights, and weekends. Without his love and constant encouragement, I never would have made it here. For this, I am truly blessed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

In the current era of education reform, teachers are the best asset for improving schools and for increasing student achievement. However, teachers are leaving the profession at alarming rates and the attrition of teachers has become increasingly serious for many school districts around the country (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2007; NCTAF Press Release, 2002). There is a resulting impact on student achievement, the culture of schools, and on the fiscal well-being of schools (Ingersoll, 2004a; Ingersoll 2004b; Martinez-Garcia & Slate, 2009; NCTAF, 2002; NCTAF, 2007; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Ingersoll asserted that "high rates of teacher turnover are of concern not only because they may be an outcome indicating underlying problems in how well schools function, but also because they can be disruptive, in and of themselves, for the quality of school community and performance" (2003, p. 13). Furthermore, the issues created by teacher attrition problems are exacerbated by a constant stream of teachers moving in and out of the profession, leading to a vicious cycle of recruitment, placement, and attrition. The damaging effect this has on schools and students is overwhelming.

The teacher turnover rate has consistently risen and in recent years, was at 16.8 percent, and even closer to 20 percent in some urban areas, (National Commission on

This dissertation follows the style of *Education Action Research*.

Teaching and America's Future, 2007). It was estimated that a third of teachers in the United States leave the field sometime in their first three years of teaching, and almost half leave within five years (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; NCTAF Press Release, 2002). The panacea to the problem of teacher supply and demand goes further than simply increasing the number of new hires, which has been the most common solution in recent years (Ingersoll, 2003b; Ingersoll 2004b). While teacher preparation programs have increased in number and in quality over the past decade, the number of teachers entering the profession still does not equal those leaving the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Ingersoll, 2003b). Ingersoll (2003) coined the notion of the "revolving door" to describe the detrimental effects this teacher movement has on schools and students. The "revolving door" of educators is costly, both in the financial sense, and in the way it has hurt our children's chances of receiving high quality educational opportunities in classrooms staffed by effective teachers.

The national cost of replacing this large amount of teachers was estimated at close to \$7.3 billion, according to a 2007 report from The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. The costs associated with teacher turnover stem from "time and money spent on activities associated with teacher leavers including: recruitment, hiring, administrative processing, professional development, and separation" (NCTAF, 2007, p. 4). These types of activities are aimed at new teachers with the intent of socializing them into the profession and growing them into high quality educators that will have a positive effect on student achievement. Alternatively, lack of high quality supports can translate into wasted dollars on such initiatives when teachers may only last in the profession for a few years.

Teacher attrition is most prevalent in schools with low-income and at-risk populations, but it is an issue that does affect all types of schools in all parts of the country. Studies show that "high-poverty public schools have far higher teacher turnover rates than do more affluent schools. Urban public schools have more turnover than do suburban and rural public schools," (Ingersoll, 2004, p. 13). As a result of the disparate levels of attrition, schools with greater populations of students in poverty are more likely to be staffed with the least effective and most underprepared teachers (NCTAF, 2002). Furthermore, "children who had the least effective teachers three years in a row posted achievement gains that were 54 percent lower than the gains of children who had the most effective teachers three years in a row," (NCTAF, 2002). In addition, hiring and attrition can be a greater problem for specific subject areas, such as math, science, and special education (Ingersoll, 2000). Due to the fact that teacher retention problems generally plague the hardest-to-staff schools, it is necessary to investigate the internal forces at work in those schools. With a greater understanding of the causes and effects of teacher attrition at the school level, we may begin to craft solutions to this human capital problem.

Statement of the Problem

The literature outlines myriad factors involved in teacher retention and attrition, including salaries, induction, resources, and teachers' levels of preparation. These large-scale problems have been widely studied, and yet adequate solutions have not been found (Darling-Hammond, et al. 2005; Finn, Kanstoroom, & Petrilli, 1999; Good & Brophy, 2008; Ingersoll, 2004a; NCCTQ, 2007; NCTAF, 2007). On the other hand, the micro-level problems related to teacher retention have received less attention in the literature. School principals directly and indirectly control the relationships and events that occur in schools

and they have a responsibility for positively influencing the teachers under their leadership. The micropolitics of schools, which involve the complex relationships between principals and teachers (Achinstein, 2002; Ball, 1987; Blase, 1987; Eilertsen et al., 2008), have the potential to either encourage or deter teachers from remaining in the teaching profession. By evaluating the leadership quality at the school-level, and the resulting effect on novice teachers, this study intended to describe the micropolitical factors that may lead to teacher retention or attrition. In particular, principal decision-making processes and the relationship between principals and teachers were studied.

Significance of the Study

This study has both theoretical and practical significance. Teacher retention is an issue that has been extensively studied over the past few decades, and no concrete conclusions have been drawn about how to permanently address this problem. There is a lack of substantial research that links a principal's relationship with novice teachers with the resulting effect this may have on teacher retention. In terms of teacher retention at Smith Elementary School, an average of 91 percent of the teachers have been retained over the last three years (D. Franklin, personal communication, May, 18, 2011). As compared to recent national data which cited attrition rates between 16 and 20 percent (NCTAF, 2007), Smith's retention data placed the school in the average-high range. By developing an understanding of the micropolitics involved in school leadership, I expected that evidence would demonstrate why some teachers are making the decision to stay in the profession while others are choosing to leave. The data gleaned through this study will not only add to the body of research on teacher retention, but it will also offer practical solutions for school principals as to how to best retain teachers under their leadership.

Theoretical Framework

Researchers have adequately defined the many reasons teachers give for their dissatisfaction with the teaching profession, for example, salary (NCCTQ, 2007), working conditions (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999; Ingersoll, 2004a), and lack of mentoring or induction support (Honaker, 2004; Moir & Gless, 2001; Wilkinson, 1994). Many have even conducted in-depth studies of those particular factors that are causing teachers to exit the profession (Angelle, 2006; Cherubini, 2007; Honaker, 2004; Kardos, et al., 2001; Martinez-Garcia & Slate, 2009; NCCTQ, 2007; NCTAF, 2007; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). However, when carefully evaluating the list of factors that are related to teacher dissatisfaction, many can be attributed to school-level decisions and actions taken by a principal (Angelle, 2006; Cherubini, 2007; Martinez-Garcia & Slate, 2009). The role of the principal has been largely overlooked in the teacher retention literature, possibly because the significant impact this individual may make on new teachers, in both direct and indirect ways, has not been recognized. As a result of this hypothesis, the current study focused on a description of the micropolitics of schools as they are related to teacher retention.

Micropolitical theory was drawn upon to guide the research process and to frame the explanation of findings in this study. Micropolitical theory has been characterized by various researchers to include the ways power can be used in organizational settings (Iannacone, 1975; Hoyle, 1982; 1986). Micropolitics are inherently present in schools. Blase and colleagues' have spent several decades researching the micropolitics of schools and describing the interactions between principals and teachers (Ball, 1987; Blase, 1987; 1991; Blase and Anderson, 1995; Blase & Blase, 2002).

The power differentials in schools are enacted formally and informally, and have implications for principal leadership and relationships between teachers and administrators. Conflict and collaboration are two hallmarks of micropolitics of schools (Ball, 1987); the presence of one or both of these interaction types can heavily influence the school culture, the relationships within the school, and the decisions that are made by teachers and leaders in the school. As a result of the power held by different groups, novice teacher satisfaction and their resulting retention rates may be either positively or negatively influenced. The intersection of micropolitics with the issue of teacher retention is where this study lies; by observing teacher and principal interactions and by evaluating leadership decisions and actions, I intended to assess the level of influence specific micropolitical factors had upon the issue of teacher retention.

Research Questions

- 1) How do principals make important decisions about the events and structures for novice teachers at their schools?
- 2) How do teachers perceive the role of the principal in their schools?
- 3) What influence do the micropolitics between principals and teachers have on the retention of novice teachers?

Limitations and Delimitations

As seen through the vast amount of literature on teacher retention, significant research has been conducted on this topic. Despite the large body of available research, there still remain gaps in knowledge that must be filled. While Ingersoll and colleagues (2000, 2003, 2004, 2007) have done an extensive analysis of the data from several iterations of the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) over the last decade, and other

researchers (Honaker, 2004; Kardos, et al., 2001; Martinez-Garcia & Slate, 2009) have looked at teacher retention from various angles, there are still important questions to be answered about the issue. Unfortunately, due to time and resource constraints, I was unable to address the many unanswered questions about this topic.

For example, little attention has been given to the ways race and gender have impacted retention levels, especially with respect to the influence of micropolitics on different racial and gender groups. By looking at these variables, data about the differential power relations between and among these groups as they carry out the tasks of teaching and administration may emerge. It would also be useful to approach the teacher retention issue by assessing the preparation route from which teachers originate, and even the type of certification they may hold. These factors could have an influence on expectations, motivation, and satisfaction of novice teachers. Furthermore, a study on teacher retention may be enhanced by controlling for school status, as determined by student achievement data. This information could make a more direct connection between the micropolitics, retention levels, and the effect on student achievement levels, which are ultimately the bottom line in schools. Finally, in defining the types of teachers and the categories of teachers who are the cause of attrition, I could further break down these groups into definitive categories. For example, different types of teachers could be categorized as novice or seasoned, and the differential retention rates and reasons for attrition could be investigated and compared for these two groups. In addition, the current study has classified all teachers who have left a school to have left the profession, whereas a more detailed study may consider that a teacher may instead be a mover, and have simply gone to teach at another school. These fine distinctions about retention factors, school status,

and teacher categories would be useful in presenting a different angle on the phenomenon of teacher retention, however this study does not seek to attend to these variables.

Assumptions

Some specific assumptions helped to design and define the approach to the case study.

1. The participants being interviewed were aware of the study's purpose, understood the interview questions being asked, and were honest in their responses.
2. Interpretation of interview and observational data accurately reflected each participant's intentions.
3. The methodology described in this report offered a logical and appropriate design for a study of this nature.

Limitations

Some specific limitations helped to frame the study, placing parameters around the research design.

1. The case study is limited to the participants in the study. Seven novice teachers, one lead mentor, and one principal participated in the study.
2. The generalizations made in this report are limited by the information gathered in the literature review and the data that was collected through interview, observation, and document collection.
3. The nature of micropolitical theory may have limited participants' responses and their ability to be forthcoming with information.

The current study focused on collecting data at one elementary school that has demonstrated stable teacher retention status, and a description of the micropolitics seen at that school follows. By assessing the principal's role in making particular decisions about activities aimed at supporting novice teachers, researchers and practitioners will be presented with a case study that offers a connection between specific school-based decisions and actions and their resulting impact on the retention of teachers. The hope is that the findings have provided a rich description of the micropolitics in one school, and that conclusions about that particular setting can be used as the impetus for making suggestions about best practices for administrators and for developing subsequent large-scale quantitative studies.

Researcher's Perspective

The idea of studying teacher retention came to me as a young teacher in New York City about nine years ago. I recognized that in urban schools, like the one where I was teaching, there was a great deal of teacher turnover, which was in turn having a negative impact on the culture of the schools. As this was one of the low-performing NYC schools where teachers were being paid an additional 15% and given additional professional development, I dismissed salary as a factor that was impacting teachers in our school. After all, we were receiving better compensation than other teachers in the city who were also facing similar challenges, and if others were like me, they did not enter this profession for the salary. After rejecting salary as a factor that was influential to teachers, I began to pay more attention to the different types of activities that were in place to support new teachers. I saw relatively strong induction and mentoring programs, as well as adequate resources, opportunities for professional development, and collaboration among teachers. Despite the

availability of these supports, teachers were still leaving at alarming rates. It made me wonder what other variables differed by school that could lead to disparate levels of retention.

Over the course of the last nine years, and through my administrative and doctoral coursework, I have largely focused my attention on reading about and exploring the research on teacher retention. A wide range of studies have evaluated the topic from different viewpoints, but I have never been satisfied with the resulting findings and conclusions in these studies. Additionally, throughout this time period, increased attention has been paid to teacher quality initiatives and other forms of educator accountability, often accompanied by different types and levels of supports for teachers. In spite of the increased attention to improving teacher quality, little progress has been made in lowering the attrition rates, particularly in urban schools and those affected by poverty. Further reading and thought led me to the conclusion that there is one person in each school who has the ability to "make or break" the school; the school principal has a great deal of power and influence over people, decisions, and resources. Of the reasons teachers cited as factors in their exit from the profession, such as class size, paperwork, classroom resources, mentoring, and student discipline (Ingersoll, 2003a), many were under the purview of the school principal.

As I progressed in my doctoral coursework, I was excited to take a course titled "Politics of Education," because I recognized that politics and education are intertwined and the agendas of stakeholder groups have a heavy influence on what happens in states, districts, schools, and classrooms. I was particularly interested in learning more about how politics were affecting schools and classrooms, as well as the principals, teachers, and

students who inhabited them. In this course, I came across a book chapter titled, "Beyond Pluralistic Patterns of Power: Research on the Micropolitics of Schools," by Betty Malen and Melissa Vincent Cochran (2008). This chapter alerted me to the notion that there was a term for the idea I was having about the principal's role in schools; micropolitics was defined to encompass the politics and authoritative patterns that played out at the school-level. The light bulb that went off in my head at that moment made me realize that micropolitical theory could possibly be used to frame my thinking about the teacher retention problems I was so concerned about. Through this study, I hoped to adequately relate micropolitical theory to the issue of teacher retention, such that the findings will lead others to consider this framework for understanding similar education issues.

Organization of the Study

This chapter has provided the background for the study, introducing the problem of teacher retention and the context in which it was studied. Chapter II presents a review of the literature on the topic of teacher retention, with attention to the factors associated with retention and attrition, as well as the effects related to attrition. The limitations of the current research base are considered. There is also a discussion of micropolitical theory as a framework for understanding the problem of teacher retention. Chapter III addresses the methodology used in the study, including the research design, sampling and data collection methods, and the data analysis plan. Validity issues are also considered in Chapter III. Chapter IV presents the findings that resulted from the study, with particular attention to the stated research questions. A rich description of the case and the participants' perspectives being studied are part of this chapter. In addition, Chapter IV relates the findings to micropolitical theory, drawing connections between this framework and the

evidence that was provided through the case study. Chapter V concludes the study, tying together the information from the preceding four chapters. This final chapter also presents readers with a discussion of the topic of teacher retention in light of the current study's findings, and further addresses the implications in three areas: (1) practice; (2) policy; and (3) further research.

Definitions

AYP- adequate yearly progress; a measurement established by the No Child Left Behind (2001) legislation that allows the United States Department of Education to determine the academic performance of public schools according to the results of standardized tests

Administrators- school leaders, also known as principals; any individual in a leadership capacity of principal or assistant principal that exerts authority over teachers in the school setting.

Attrition- the loss of personnel that occurs when teachers leave the teaching profession due to retirement or resignation

DRA- developmental reading assessments; an individually administered assessment of a child's reading capabilities

FIRST- Framework for Inducting, Retaining, and Supporting Teachers; the induction program being used in the school district in the case study

Leavers- teachers who left the teaching profession after a specified period of time

Micropolitics- the interaction between and among individuals within public education; the events and interactions that take place in and around a school

Movers- teachers who were still teaching but had moved to a different school

Novice Teacher- a teacher who has taught for three years or less

PALS- phonological awareness literacy screening; a screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring tool for measuring student literacy

Principal- a school administrator who has the primary responsibility for leadership of a school

Public School- an elementary or secondary school in the United States that is supported by public funds and provides free education for children of a community or district

Retention- the ability to keep teachers as employees of a school

SOL- standards of learning; the set of rigorous academic standards used to guide instruction and assessment in the commonwealth of Virginia

Stayers- teachers who were teaching in the same school in the current school year as in previous year(s)

Title I- a set of programs within the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) set up by the United States Department of Education to distribute funding to schools and school districts with a high percentage of students from low-income families

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Teacher Retention: An Introduction

In the current era of education reform, teachers are the best asset for improving schools and for increasing student achievement. However, teachers are leaving the profession at alarming rates and the attrition of teachers is becoming increasingly serious for many school districts around the country. There is a resulting impact on student achievement, the culture of schools, and on the fiscal well-being of schools. Ingersoll (2003b) asserts that "high rates of teacher turnover are of concern not only because they may be an outcome indicating underlying problems in how well schools function, but also because they can be disruptive, in and of themselves, for the quality of school community and performance" (p. 13). Furthermore, the issues created by teacher attrition are exacerbated by a constant stream of teachers moving in and out of the profession, leading to a vicious cycle of recruitment, placement, and attrition. The damaging effect this has on schools and students is overwhelming.

In Chapter II, readers are presented with literature that describes the historical background of the issue of teacher retention, some causes of teacher attrition, some effects of teacher attrition, and the relationship between school leadership and the retention of teachers. The chapter then transitions into a discussion of the literature as it relates to micropolitical theory, specifically the ways in which the organization of schools and the experience of novice teachers are impacted. There is additional discussion about the micropolitics of teacher-principal interactions and the micropolitics of teacher-teacher interactions as well as the influence of race and diversity in these interactions.

History of Teacher Retention

In order to understand the issue of teacher attrition and retention in schools, it is important to know about how schools have evolved over the past several decades. This section addresses the role of teachers and administrators throughout history because this history has an effect on the contemporary issues in education. In the seminal work by John Goodlad (1984) entitled *A Place Called School*, a historical portrait was painted to describe the circumstances of teaching beginning in the second half of the twentieth century. The 1970's were characterized by increasingly negative perceptions about public schooling in America. Due in part to the Coleman Report (Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld, & York, 1966), which addressed school inequities in funding and services, and the subsequent A Nation at Risk report (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), which centered on the ill-preparedness of America's teachers, teachers were facing mounting criticism accompanied by decreasing support for their work in schools. While teaching has been viewed as highly complex work, requiring judgment and skill, it has also historically been accompanied by a lack of prestige or legitimacy, leading sociologists to categorize it as a semi-profession (Etzioni, 1969; Lortie, 1969; Simpson, 1985). During the 1980's, as public skepticism in education was rising, teachers' frustrations were also rising (Chapman, 1983).

Several causes were cited to describe the public perception about the impact on the quality and value of the teaching profession during that time period. Over the course of the 1900s, the teaching profession saw a shift in the gender composition of its workforce; as more men moved into school administration or careers outside of education, women moved into teaching roles (Goodlad, 1984). Also during that time period, there became an

increasingly wide separation between teachers and administrators, as the elite profession of school managers evolved during the reform movement of the 1920s (Marshall, 1991).

During the 1960s and 1970s, a teaching career served many women well as they were most interested in balancing their familial duties with a career outside the home. In fact, Lortie (1975) reported that many women left and reentered the workforce during the 1960's and 1970's, which had a short-term effect on teacher retention for schools, but made a relatively minimal long-term impact. At the time, teachers were minimally incentivized or discouraged by the nature of schools and the conditions presented in their work life.

Furthermore, most men and women entering the teaching force did not cite salary as a major influence in selecting the profession. The varied factors involved in the changing workforce were reasons for the public to criticize the education profession, but as Lortie (1975) asserted, these factors had little overall effect on the quality of the profession or the retention of the teachers.

Despite the initial perception that teaching was a relatively stable and rewarding career, teachers began to recognize specific factors as the cause of dissatisfaction and even early departures from the career. Among the most highly ranked reasons for dissatisfaction, teachers mentioned the difficulties in addressing student needs and getting to the true work of teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond & Wise, 1985; Goodlad, 1984; Rosenholtz, 1989; Veenman, 1984). Blase (1986) and Rosenholtz (1989) both reported that student misbehavior created a burden for teachers, which impacted their abilities to learn and execute instructional skills to their full potential. This notion of control over the work of teaching has been frequently recognized as a problem in attracting, developing, and retaining effective educators into public schools (Bredeson, et al., 1983; Ingersoll, 2003b;

Rosenholtz, 1989). As a possible effect of these challenging work experiences, and in spite of the fact that salary was not an important factor in career selection, salary began to appear as a major reason for teachers to exit the profession (Goodlad, 1984).

There was also a disproportionate placement of novice teachers in challenging teaching experiences, either those in schools affected by high-poverty and high-risk students, or in classrooms with the most challenging student populations (Johnson, 2004; Rosenholtz, 1989; Taylor & Dale, 1971; Veenman, 1984). The difficulties associated with managing classrooms of this type, at times combined with low levels of external support and guidance, led to the frustration of many new teachers. Ryan (1979) and Veenman (1984) further asserted that beginning teachers were lacking in training for the specific challenges of the jobs in which they were placed. Compound these factors with the fact that the teaching field lacked a structured induction or initiation process common in many other professions (Lortie, 1975; Tyack, 1974). Furthermore, situational causes such as class size, lack of resources, administrative duties, and conflict with colleagues were inconsistently recognized as factors in teacher dissatisfaction (Goodlad, 1984; Rosenholtz, 1989; Veenman, 1984). While situational factors may have been inconsequential to some teachers, the organizational context of schools and the overall leadership of principals were much more influential.

Some of the other non-pecuniary factors that were involved in teacher satisfaction, or lack thereof, included leadership practices, availability of support, involvement in decision-making, and opportunities to exercise professional autonomy (Bentzen, 1974; Chapman, 1983; Chapman & Hatcheson, 1982; Goodlad, 1984; Rosenholtz, 1989). When people were given work opportunities that allowed them to grow and develop, to perfect

skills and learn new ones, experience challenges, they tended to make progress and feel a sense of personal accomplishment (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). These factors have generally led to either positive or negative outcomes for teachers and schools, depending on the ways that principals have chosen to exercise their leadership.

Rosenholtz (1989) contended that "the organizational conditions of schools create some of the major problems associated with teacher quality and commitment" (p. 427). Principals are largely responsible for shaping the school culture and organizational environment in which teachers and students can be successful. Because of the variable quality of principal leadership reported across school types and throughout history, differential practices remain in place that have either hindered or promoted teacher satisfaction and retention. Leadership has been chiefly exercised through the priorities placed on events and interactions in schools, such as goal-setting, hiring practices, professional development activities, teacher collaboration, mentoring arrangements, and induction programs (Ingersoll, 2003b; Rosenholtz, 1989; Sergiovanni, 1982). Ingersoll (2003b, 2003c) asserts that teacher attrition has resulted from underlying problems in how well schools function; an inattention to the organizational factors and implications over the past several decades has created a situation in public schools in which retention of effective teachers is problematic. The historical events in public education have largely contributed to the way teaching and learning takes place in schools at the present. This framework is central to understanding how schools have come to experience the problem of teacher retention.

Current Status of Teacher Retention

As described in the previous section, educational events in history have led to the current point in time where teacher retention has become critical to the success of schools. Despite the fact that researchers and policymakers are aware that teacher retention is a problem for our public schools, little progress has been made over the last several decades in creating solutions and reversing this problem. There are some serious consequences that have resulted from the problem of teacher attrition, which will be described in this chapter. There are also multiple factors that have been evaluated and discussed as potential causes for this phenomenon, many of which I will outline in this chapter.

Teacher attrition, or turnover, is defined as the loss of personnel that occurs when teachers leave the teaching profession due to retirement or resignation. The teacher turnover rate has been consistently rising and is now at 16.8 percent, and even closer to 20 percent in some urban areas, (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2007). It is estimated that a third of teachers in the United States leave the field sometime in their first three years of teaching, and almost half leave within five years (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; NCTAF Press Release, 2002). Furthermore, in a 12-month period during 1999-2000, over a million teachers were in job transition, either into, between, or out of schools (Ingersoll, 2004b). The panacea to the problem of teacher supply and demand goes further than simply increasing the number of new hires, which has been the most common solution in recent years.

While teacher preparation programs have increased in number and in quality over the past decade, the number of teachers entering the profession still does not equal those leaving the profession. Ingersoll (2003b) coined the term "revolving door" to describe the

detrimental effects this teacher movement has on schools and students. The “revolving door” of educators is costly, both in the financial sense, and in the way it is hurting our children’s chances of receiving high quality educational opportunities in classrooms staffed by effective teachers.

Effects of Teacher Attrition

Financial Costs

The national cost of replacing this large number of teachers is close to \$7.3 billion, according to a 2007 report from The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF, 2007). The costs associated with teacher turnover stem from "time and money spent on activities associated with teacher leavers including: recruitment, hiring, administrative processing, professional development, and separation," (NCTAF, 2007, p. 4). These types of activities are aimed at new teachers with the intent of socializing them into the profession and growing them into high quality educators that will have a positive effect on student achievement. Alternatively, lack of high quality supports can translate into wasted dollars on such initiatives when teachers may only last in the profession for a few years.

Teacher Quality

Over the last decade, a surge of reform has occurred in which teacher quality initiatives have played a central role. "A major objective of NCLB is to ensure that all students regardless of race, ethnicity, or income have the best teachers possible" (USDE, 2004, p. 19). The chain of accountability based on accreditation, licensure, and certification requirements was put in place to support the goals of NCLB, but it is unclear how these requirements have helped to increase teacher quality or teacher retention

(Martinez-Garcia & Slate, 2009; Ingersoll, 2003c). Researchers and policymakers have struggled to define teacher effectiveness and have faced challenges in determining methods for school staffing that distribute the most effective teachers in the most equitable ways.

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2003) and Ingersoll (2004b) both contend that schools in high poverty areas have more difficulty hiring and have higher overall attrition rates. Wide variability in teacher supply and demand is evidenced, even within the same city, as some schools face difficulties in filling positions, while others have an abundance of candidates (Martinez-Garcia & Slate, 2009). This disparity reflects the idea that there are specific conditions that are attractive to new teachers, as well as the idea that there may not be a dearth of candidates after all.

By widening the entry gate and increasing the quantity of teachers coming into the system, districts can control labor costs via teacher salaries, but they face a decrease in teacher quality and a risk for higher teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2004b). Treating workers as interchangeable, expendable, low-skill workers may cut some costs, however these strategies often lead to the notion of the profession as low-status, which in turn has effects on policymakers' decisions to make adjustments to salary and working conditions (Ingersoll, 2003a). These conflicts pose challenges for schools and districts as they decide the best approach for solving the teacher retention crisis.

High need urban and rural schools are frequently staffed with inequitable concentrations of under-prepared, inexperienced teachers who are left to labor on their own to meet the needs of their students (NCTAF, 2007). Policies associated with state school funding, district resource allocations, and school-level tracking generally leave minority students with less-qualified and less-experienced teachers (Darling-Hammond & Berry,

1999). Teachers in specific content areas like math, science, and special education, experience higher rates of attrition, as well as the fact that teachers with higher academic abilities, as determined by measures like SAT scores and teacher licensure tests, are more likely to turn over (Henke, Chen, & Geis, 2000; Schlecty & Vance, 1981; Weaver, 1983). Recent studies have shown that differences in teacher quality may represent the single most important school resource differential between black and white children in the United States; these disparate educational outcomes are much more a function of unequal access to key educational resources, including skilled instruction from quality teachers, than they are a function of race or class (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). As a result, teacher quality has a larger effect on student achievement than other classroom variables and many of the country's most needy students are receiving varied levels rigorous and effective instruction. Alternatively, the effects of well-prepared teachers on student achievement can be stronger than the influences of student background factors, such as poverty, language, and minority status (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Teacher turnover has a cyclic effect, in which constant attrition impacts student achievement and school culture in negative ways and this decline in organizational stability, coherence, and morale is not easily quantified (Martinez-Garcia & Slate, 2009; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Student Achievement

Although teacher attrition is most prevalent in schools with low-income and at-risk populations, it is an issue that has a range of impacts on society. Studies show that "high-poverty public schools have far higher teacher turnover rates than do more affluent schools. Urban public schools have more turnover than do suburban and rural public

schools" (Ingersoll, 2004a, p. 13). As a result of the disparate levels of attrition, schools with greater populations of students in poverty are more likely to be staffed with the least effective and most underprepared teachers (NCTAF, 2002). Furthermore, "children who had the least effective teachers three years in a row posted achievement gains that were 54 percent lower than the gains of children who had the most effective teachers three years in a row," (NCTAF, 2002).

Among school characteristics, school poverty level was one of the highest predictors of whether a teacher would stay or leave teaching, particularly after their first year (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, p. 702). Further, "an inordinate amount of their capital-both human and financial-is consumed by the constant process of hiring and replacing beginning teachers who leave before they have mastered the ability to create a successful learning culture for their students," (NCTAF, 2007, p. 2).

One of the most detrimental effects of high turnover is the negative message it sends to students, parents, and communities about the quality of education happening in their local schools (Martinez-Garcia & Slate, 2009). The notion that the school is unstable and has problems retaining its workforce poses concerns for many parents, especially in the schools where the most effective teachers are needed to impact student achievement. Ingersoll (2004b) sums up this sentiment by stating that "access to qualified teachers is one of the most important, but least equitably distributed, of educational resources. Teacher shortages disproportionately impact students in disadvantaged schools and are a major factor in the stratification of educational opportunity" (p. 3).

Reasons for Attrition

Researchers and policymakers cite a few key factors in teachers' decisions to leave the profession. National data gathered from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) in 1999-2000, reports that while only 14 percent of educators were retiring, an additional 40 percent were leaving the field altogether (Ingersoll, 2003a). "The data suggest that after just five years, between 40 and 50 percent of all beginning teachers have left the profession," (Ingersoll, 2003b, p. 148). Research on school effects indicates that several characteristics are observed consistently in schools that elicit positive results, including leadership, school climate, teacher attitudes, emphasis on instruction, monitoring of teacher and student progress, and the importance of praise. It follows then, that these school features also have consequences for novice teachers' contentment with the profession of teaching (Good & Brophy, 2008). The following are some of the central reasons commonly cited by teachers for their early exit from the teaching profession.

School Culture

Good schools are like good families in that they are characterized by a sense of belonging, continuity, and community (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Durkheim, 1961; Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Parsons, 1959; Rosenholtz, 1989). Supportive learning environments should be comprised of teams of teachers and administrators working together for improved student learning. When principals build and promote a shared vision, in which they also participate, success is likely in their schools (Martinez-Garcia & Slate, 2009). As a result, the type of environment that novice teachers enter is critical in setting the stage for their success or failure in their chosen career. "Professional culture is the distinctive blend of norms, values, and accepted modes of professional practice, both formal and informal, that

prevail among colleagues," (Kardos, Johnson, Peske, Kauffman, & Liu, 2001). Moreover, if the values of the organization are compatible with the values of the employee, the employee will likely have a positive attitude toward the workplace (Angelle, 2006). As a result, nurturing school cultures improve retention rates (Cherubini, 2007).

Teachers are best served in integrated professional cultures where there is sustained support and ongoing exchange across experience levels for all teachers. This culture is evidenced by seasoned and novice teachers working in tandem for the good of their students and their school, with particular attention to the needs of new teachers (Kardos, et al., 2001). "In integrated cultures, the organized structures for support, the norms for how work gets done, and the prevailing attitudes and beliefs about collegiality and professional growth were embedded in the school's professional culture" (Kardos et al., 2001, p. 275). Furthermore, as collaboration increases, isolation decreases and teacher satisfaction will also likely increase (Honaker, 2004).

Teachers socialized into effective schools identify with a school community geared to high expectations for students, and often experience a satisfaction with their chosen career. Bryk, Camburn, and Louis (1999) assert that professional communities must have strategies in place for developing and maintaining productive norms and practices over time, paying particular attention to the induction of new members of the school community. Alternatively, some teachers may be socialized into ineffective schools, where they may have such poor experiences that they become frustrated, burnt out and have a high risk of leaving the profession. They may also enter an ineffective school environment, where they become part of spreading the ineffective practices, becoming leaders of poor practices, and create a cycle where other novices enter the school and learn poor habits.

This cycle of ineffectuality may be even more problematic for schools and student achievement than the effects of teacher attrition (Angelle, 2006; Kardos et al., 2001).

Collegiality

It has been established that better teacher and student outcomes are achieved by school models that foster common learning experiences, opportunities for cooperative work and continual relationships, and greater participation of parents, teachers, and students (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). Novice teachers seek cues from colleagues about how to interact in their new role as a teacher (Kardos et al., 2001), and their first interactions with veteran teachers have a large impact on their future satisfaction and success. As an aspect of school culture, collegiality is an essential element of a high-functioning school environment, and indicative of shared leadership within the school. When novice and experienced teachers work together, student achievement is positively impacted. This requires the vision and commitment of leaders to create a school culture that supports regular and sustained collaboration among teachers and groups (Kardos et al., 2001). The effects are worthwhile, as stated by Angelle (2006), because "professional socialization, the process whereby the novice learns about and becomes part of the organization, influences teacher quality and longevity" (p. 318). Little (1982) also found that students exhibited better performance as a result of their teachers' collegiality.

In a recent study of new teachers' experiences, about two-thirds of teachers revealed that they had common planning time with other teachers in their content area and regularly collaborated for instructional purposes (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Many levels of peer support happen informally and independent of official induction or mentoring programs, but can still offer benefits to novice teachers (Cherubini, 2007). Teachers benefit

from being involved in an external network of teachers and they also look to teacher leaders in their schools for guidance. The involvement in these types of collegial activities led to a reduced risk for leaving by about 43 percent (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

New teachers admire the abilities of seasoned teachers to manage the diverse tasks of teaching and to manage student learning. The collegial relationship that can develop as these more experienced teachers model effective practice serves new teachers well (Cherubini, 2007), often having the effect of developing a new cadre of teacher leaders. This circular support system is an advantage to principals because it gives them additional assistance in guiding new teachers (Honaker, 2004) and broadens the scope of influence being offered to the novice teacher. Collegiality is deemed a priority when the principal makes time for it in the daily schedule.

Despite the reports of the positive effects of collegiality and supportive school culture, many schools are still promoting unproductive practices. The practice of solo teaching in self-contained classrooms occurs regularly and as a result, good teachers have few opportunities or incentives to share their expertise with colleagues. Further, beginning teachers are left to fend for themselves without collegial support, mentoring and coaching (NCTAF, 2007). The nature of schools and work in classrooms may present the picture that teachers have autonomy and can use discretion in their own classrooms, however there is an isolation that results from such a system that is more troubling to new teachers (Ingersoll, 2004a). In a recent national study, only 26 percent of middle and high school teachers reported receiving excellent support from fellow teachers on lesson plans and teaching techniques compared with only 39 percent of elementary teachers receiving the

same types of support. These disparaging reports indicate that collegiality is an undervalued but critical goal in all schools.

Induction and Mentoring

Teacher induction programs offer the kind of support needed for many beginning teachers if they are to remain in the profession and develop into educators who are capable of teaching today's high standards and accountability (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002). These programs are seen as a bridge, enabling the "student of teaching" to become a "teacher of students" (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, p. 29). The research has overwhelmingly pointed to the success of teacher induction and mentoring programs; California's BTSA (Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program) reports retention rates of 96 percent for first year teachers who participated in the program, and over five years, the rates only dropped to 91 percent, as compared to a retention rate of 63 percent for those teachers who were not involved in the program (NCTAF, 2002). In addition, a national study by Ingersoll and Smith (2004) determined that comprehensive approaches to induction can reduce attrition by more than 50 percent. In designing and adopting induction programs, states and districts should look at effective induction models, such as those in California, Texas, or Ohio, to structure their programs in ways that positively influence new teachers (Martinez-Garcia & Slate, 2009).

Attention to the design of induction programs is critical in ensuring that the overall goals of developing, supporting, and retaining teachers are promoted through the designated activities. "Depending on the nature of the programs, including the extent to which they focus on support as well as evaluation and the extent to which they help teachers address real problems of practice, these induction initiatives can make a

substantial difference in teacher recruitment and retention" (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999, p. 270). Comprehensive induction programs are based on four principles: (a) building and deepening teacher knowledge; (b) integrating new practitioners into the teaching community and school culture that support the continuous professional growth of all teachers; (c) supporting the constant development of the teaching community and school; (d) encouraging professional dialogue that articulates the goals, values, and best practices of a community (NCTAF, 2007). Strong induction programs provide the same information to all beginning teachers, giving them a foundation for their work in the school or district (Honaker, 2004); they also streamline the elements of the program, so as not to add undue burden on new teachers.

Moir & Gless (2001) contend that induction programs should include as a central component activities and interactions that promote the school's vision, which should have the effect of integrating teachers into the unique culture of the school. There is also research to support the fact that induction programs should be responsive to teacher and student characteristics and their understandings of teaching and learning as it applies in their specific environment (Olebe, 2005; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). One element of a successful induction program is that it allows flexibility in the methods of addressing the individual needs of each new teacher. Wilkinson (1994) recommends that programs be designed to "accommodate beginning teachers who are developmentally at different stages, who have different needs and require various types of assistance" (p. 59). On the other hand, when teachers experience a disconnect between the professional development offered and their specific needs as new teachers, the fragmented or unrelated nature of the

induction program does not serve them well (Cherubini, 2007). Induction programs should be tailored to the needs of the teachers and the school in order to be successful.

The critical factors in differentiating between induction programs are the duration and intensity (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004); programs are further varied according to the purpose. These differences are important in determining whether the needs of new teachers can adequately be met or if programs are simply fulfilling a state or district requirement. Some common activities included in induction programs are mentoring, collaboration or planning time, seminars for new teachers, and regular meetings with administrators all of which appear to foster the integration of new teachers into the school culture (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). In fact, the more options for induction activities that are available to new teachers, the greater the likelihood that they will feel supported and successful.

Teachers who have access to a mentoring relationship will be much less likely to leave teaching in the early years. When teachers have a mentor to support them at the beginning of their career, they become more competent and skilled at teaching, and are able to seek out assistance in order to allay their stress and concerns. Prior to the 1980's, the type of mentoring we now commonly use was not considered an important component of new teacher induction; rather, mentoring "revolved around mentor teachers who worked as support personnel in induction programs for first-year teachers" (Odell & Huling, 1998, p. 73).

The mentoring programs that are in use today, like the induction programs they are generally part of, have wide variation in the ways they are enacted. The level of training provided to mentors, the attention to match between the mentor and mentee, the availability of time and structure for mentor meetings, and the level of compensation

offered to mentors are all factors that should be considered in evaluating the quality of a mentoring program (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Youngs, 2007). Evertson & Smithey (2000) further contend that having mentoring programs in place is not sufficient to support teachers, but that mentors must be skilled at supporting and guiding new teachers. Moreover, mentors require training and support for their role in effectively guiding novice teachers (Honaker, 2004; Kardos et al., 2001; Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

In high-quality mentoring, it is believed that mentors served in a collaborative, supportive role, empowering beginning teachers to take their learning into their own hands and promote their individual growth by exerting their professional autonomy (Cherubini, 2007). Teachers who have experienced effective mentoring suggest that increasing mentoring support may have an impact on their desire to stay or leave a school (Ingersoll, 2003a). Smith & Ingersoll (2003; 2004) assert that there is a strong link between novice teacher participation in mentoring and induction programs and a teacher's chances of leaving the profession. This may be due, in part, to the way orientation and mentoring contribute to beginning teacher efficacy and pedagogical practice (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003). While the primary purpose of mentoring programs is to assist new teachers in making a successful entry into the profession by relying on the expertise of experienced teachers to provide real-world training and assistance (Martinez-Garcia & Slate, 2009), it is necessary to ensure that such programs are effectively meeting the needs of novice teachers in schools.

Salary

Often conceived by the public as one of the primary reasons for teacher attrition, salary is an issue that is considered by new teachers. However, only when it is considered

with other more serious factors does it become a deciding factor. While higher salaries tend to entice teachers to enter certain districts, it is usually not the sole reason for a teacher to leave a school. In a recent study, it was revealed that 78 percent of new teachers see salary as a major drawback to the profession but at least two-thirds of those teachers believe it is possible to make a decent living as a teacher (NCCTQ, 2007). Most teachers would choose better working conditions, such as better student behavior, more parental involvement, or better administrative support, over higher salaries (NCCTQ, 2007). Bruno (1986) asserts that if retention and classroom performance are not simultaneously addressed, differentiated pay systems or other compensation-incentive programs will be unsuccessful in improving students' education.

Professional Autonomy and Recognition

Beyond salary incentives, teachers appreciate the recognition that they bring unique capabilities and backgrounds to their teaching roles (Cherubini, 2007). The lack of opportunity for growth and rewards for effective performance are regularly mentioned by teachers as incentives they feel are lacking (NCCTQ, 2007). Essential to the satisfaction of new teachers is a level of respect and awareness of their professional status. The autonomy and shared decision-making that are preferred in more collaborative models of leadership tend to better meet the needs of teachers than the traditional top-down models of school management (Learning First Alliance, 2005). In these types of leadership, an effective principal is one who shares leadership with and among teachers.

Many new teachers discover that through collaborative relationships with colleagues, they can learn from one another, further enhancing their individual role and their contribution to the school. Teachers similarly contend that the level of decision-

making influence they have over themselves and over school policies that may impact their experience in ways that help them decide whether to stay or leave teaching (Ingersoll, 2003a; Ingersoll, 2004b). Ingersoll (2004b) has found that in schools where teachers have more decision-making power, there is less conflict and less attrition.

Working Conditions

The working conditions experienced by many novice teachers are cause for dissatisfaction and often cited as one of other reasons for their early departure from schools. As with other school factors, a wide range of working conditions are evidenced in schools, and have the ability to impact new teachers in different ways. In a recent national study, 42 percent of new teachers in high need schools believed they were assigned to teach the "hardest to reach" students (NCCTQ, 2007). Further, in a study by McIntyre (2002), beginning teachers were likely to receive equally difficult or more challenging teaching assignments than their experienced colleagues. The differential placement strategies enacted by principals may not be problematic in and of themselves, but in combination with other factors, tend to create difficulties for new teachers.

Teaching out of field is another related problem, in the situation where teachers are required to teach in content areas for which they lack experience and training; these types of misplaced assignments can lead to dissatisfaction, frustration, and poor student effects (Ingersoll, 2004a). Generally, these placements are made by principals who evaluate the overall needs of the school and determine that is the best course of action in terms of convenience, cost, and time, often not taking into the account the needs of the teacher. Other factors like class size and additional duties are influential for novice teachers in describing their experiences. Departing teachers have recommended that by reducing class

size and minimizing the extra duties placed on teachers, leaders may have been able to influence their decision to leave (Honaker, 2004; Ingersoll, 2003a).

Another frequently cited issue in relation to working conditions is the lack of adequate resources offered to teachers, namely materials and supplies required to fulfill their teaching responsibilities. Teachers face many reasons for which their schools are unable to provide them with the basic necessities for teaching, with a lack of funding being the most frequently cited. As principals largely control the access to these resources, this is one example of the indirect control, or "sticks and carrots" that are held over teachers (Ingersoll, 2004a, p. 22). "Urban schools not only offer larger class sizes and pupil loads, fewer materials, and less desirable teaching conditions, they also offer less professional autonomy and lower levels of teacher participation in decision making related to curriculum, texts, materials, or teaching policies" (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999, p. 259).

Adverse working conditions like those described can compel teachers to develop coping strategies for survival in the classroom, often impacting their instruction and student achievement in negative ways. Moreover, undesirable working conditions, among the experience of other negative circumstances, can lead to teacher absenteeism and disillusionment, which may be an indicator that teachers will leave the profession prematurely (Youngs, 2007). Despite the reported teacher perceptions that various working conditions have a negative impact on their novice experiences, Ingersoll (2003a) reported contrary findings indicating that factors like large class sizes, intrusions on classroom time, and lack of planning time are not major reasons behind teacher turnover. In evaluating

these factors in combination with the other reasons cited by teachers, an overall picture of the new teacher experience develops.

Student Factors

Teachers assert that student discipline problems are one of the reasons for their early exit from the field (Ingersoll, 2003a). In a recent national study of teacher perceptions, 51 percent of high school and middle school teachers claim that "too many unmotivated students are going through the motions" in their classrooms, as opposed to only 25 percent of elementary teachers feeling the same way (NCCTQ, 2007). Further, middle and high school teachers tend to experience more challenges with student behavior and discipline that leads to their dissatisfaction (NCCTQ, 2007), with 88 percent saying that the most pressing problems in high schools come from social problems and kids who misbehave rather than academic issues. These attitudes about student behavior and motivation present frustrations for new teachers that can largely influence their novice experiences. Student discipline appears to be a major factor impacting retention in schools of all types, although the problems are more prevalent in urban or rural schools in which low-income and minority students are being taught (Martinez-Garcia & Slate, 2009). These also happen to be the schools that have difficulty filling positions with qualified and effective teachers. The cyclic nature of these problems are worthy of being addressed.

Relationship Between Leadership and Teacher Retention

Administrative leadership influences the supply and turnover of teachers as they choose to enter and remain in schools where they feel well supported in their efforts to teach. Recruiting, preparing, and retaining good teachers are central activities to the strategy for improving schools and it is incumbent on school leaders to do so in effective

ways. Brock and Grady (1998) identified the principal as a crucial component in the initial experience of new teachers. Talbert and McLaughlin (1996) further discuss the importance of school leadership in developing and sustaining professional cultures in schools by providing the needed structures and opportunities for practice. "School leadership, as the fulcrum for organizational climate and socialization, sets the tone for the beginner's first experience in the school community" (Angelle, 2006, p. 319). The overwhelming support for leadership as a contributor to school and teacher success is apparent. A connection can then be made between the influences of leadership and the levels of teacher retention that are evidenced in schools.

Just as school administrators are influential over teacher retention issues, school leaders also have a critical role to play in defining the micropolitical context of the school. The organizational nature of schools, combined with the hierarchical system among site actors is described by Ingersoll (2003c):

Principals sit at the top of that hierarchy when it comes to issues regarding personnel, budget, teacher assignments, school discipline, and student placements in classes and programs. Teachers exercise some influence on curriculum and related academic matters, but principals exercise considerable control over the key resources on which teachers are dependent and over key policies and issues that directly affect the jobs of teachers. (pp. 126-7)

Despite the degree of control held by principals, they still have the potential to use their power in inappropriate ways.

Colley (2002) contends that leaders have three primary roles in supporting new teachers, that of instructional leader, culture builder, and mentor coordinator. "At the heart

of school capacity are principals focused on the development of teachers' knowledge and skills, professional community, program coherence, and technical resources," (Fullan, 2002, p. 16). Administrators have a critical role to play in acculturating new teachers into schools and must take the responsibility of welcoming and supporting new teachers seriously (Honaker, 2004). Some activities undertaken by principals that are associated with positively impacting new teachers include formal and informal class visits, reflective feedback, discussion about teaching practices, and assistance with professional and personal growth (Hope, 1999; Angelle, 2006). Irrespective of other school features, administrative factors have been found to be far more influential in retaining novice teachers (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). Whether and how school principals provide opportunities for involvement in decision making, for collaborative work with other teachers, and for engagement in curriculum building and other professional tasks strongly determine whether beginning teachers plan to remain in the profession (Sclan, 1993).

As the organization's instructional leader, the principal is the primary source of assistance and monitoring. Monitoring that uses collaboration and reflection, and in which the principal engages in meaningful interaction with the teacher, is useful and beneficial to new teachers (Angelle, 2006). These types of activities and interactions between the principal and teachers can have the effect of minimizing the isolation of novice teachers while also enhancing their instructional skills and improving their confidence. Overall, "the structures and conditions created by school leaders can strongly shape new teachers' experiences" (Youngs, 2007, p. 103).

Leading faculty about beliefs, vision, mission, student work, and student outcomes is a powerful tool for improving teaching and learning with ideas and information being

the basic tools needed (Ash & Pearsall, 2000). In the collaborative model being described, positive school change is interactive and participative rather than top-down or bottom-up. Teachers are respected as leaders and principals serve as the leaders of leaders (Ash & Pearsall, 2000), facilitating activities that will improve their work. In the same ways that teachers enhance student learning, principals should enhance teacher learning.

Collaborative leadership models contend that there are many leadership possibilities within a school and leadership should not be role-specific and reserved only for administrators. It is the principal's job is to create learning opportunities for all teachers so they can develop into productive leaders and improve the overall school community.

Brock and Grady (2000) report that new teachers desire interaction and affirmation from their principals. They state that, "the relationship between teacher and principal is one of major importance in a teacher's work life. For beginning teachers, the climate created by the principals will be a factor in their success or failure" (Brock & Grady, 2000, p. 41). Many teachers are willing to take on more leadership responsibilities when they respect and admire their principals and feel supported by them (Mullen & Jones, 2008). As a result, the value of building collegial relationships between teachers and administrators is powerful. Furthermore, Singh and Billingsley (1998) confirm that when principals "communicate clear expectations, provide fair evaluations, and provide assistance and support, teachers experience greater professional commitment" (p. 234). Administrators that build trust between themselves and staff members, tend to encourage collaboration and teacher development that demonstrates a shared responsibility for school success (Kardos et al., 2001; Youngs, 2007). Through both direct and indirect actions, and by being actively

present, engaged, and responsive to teachers' needs, principals can positively influence the early experiences of novice teachers.

On the other hand, "teaching is an occupation beset by tension and imbalance between expectations and resources, responsibilities and powers" (Ingersoll, 2004a, pp. 21-22). The principal may enact their roles by relying on "ideas, values, and commitment" (Sergiovanni, 1996, p. 34) or may combine "passion, purpose, and meaning," (Deal & Peterson, 1994, p. 41) with the more structural tasks of leadership. Schools are controlled by bureaucratic procedures like rules, policies, and regulations which are under the control of principals. They may exercise their formal and informal authority to monitor and evaluate teachers' adherence to those procedures (Ingersoll, 2004a). The resulting conflict between leadership as management and monitoring of policies and leadership as instructional support often poses a problem for school principals, especially those new to the role; they struggle with the balance of responsibilities and often have difficulty prioritizing tasks and activities.

Since the roles and responsibilities of the principalship often align with either management tasks or instructional leadership activities, there is frequently an imbalance in how principals decide to allocate their time and efforts (Mullen & Jones, 2008). Leadership and engagement in instructional activities tend to have a greater influence on novice teachers, so principals are wise to focus their efforts in this area. By emphasizing autonomy and choice for teachers, rather than control and competition, principals can influence the micropolitical organization in constructive ways (Blase & Blase, 1999). Through an active physical presence and responsiveness in the school building, principals demonstrate for new teachers the importance of administrative support and collegiality for

professional growth and instructional improvement. When used for productive purposes, the principal's authority can be a great benefit to teachers and schools. On the other hand, when used in impractical ways, their power can have serious negative effects on teachers and schools.

Because of this uncertainty in how to effectively lead schools, many principals tend to focus more heavily on the management aspect of schools, largely ignoring the instructional needs of their teachers and students. This absence of principal leadership and support can lead teachers to feel helpless, frustrated, and isolated, often leading to their departure from the school or the profession. To gratify teachers, there must be an effort to improve working conditions and morale and this can be accomplished by leaders who have the vision and skill to transform the learning culture of schools (Fullan, 2002). Because school leaders have a strong influence on new teachers' self-efficacy and labor market decisions, it is critical for researchers and policymakers to be aware of the modes and levels of influence they can enact (Youngs, 2007).

Comparison of Past and Current State of Teacher Retention

Over the last half century, our public education system has seen many changes in the expectations for students, teachers, and administrators, and as a result, many changes have taken place in schools. The waves of reform that have swept the system have been both beneficial and harmful to the state of schools, impacting students and teachers in significant ways.

Until the mid-1960s teaching was considered a desirable profession for many women and people of color, when many other professions were not a viable option. A shift occurred when women and minorities were able to gain entry into a wide variety of

professional careers and at comparable, if not higher salaries, as they were accustomed to in the teaching field. Furthermore, the salary gap has widened over the years, where once a teaching salary was lucrative in comparison to other career choices; the current state of teacher salaries indicates that teachers are earning far less than their counterparts in other careers, even when controlling for education and experience levels (Johnson, 2004).

The salary gap is further exacerbated by the presence of unsavory working conditions. Disparate physical conditions and lack of material resources are a common problem for schools and teachers, especially those in urban and high-poverty areas. Even in the presence of counterproductive conditions, there were features of schools that promoted contentment and encouraged teachers to remain in the profession, and more so for the previous cadres of teachers, these school characteristics were not of great importance. Given the differential conditions in which teachers are expected to work, it is no wonder that attrition rates are climbing steadily with each generation of teachers that enter the workforce. One of the problems in this era of school reform and accountability is to ensure that such non-pecuniary conditions are present in all schools and opportunities for positive induction experiences are available for all novice teachers.

Despite these factors, the majority of teachers hired during the 1960s and 1970s have experienced career longevity, remaining in the profession for their entire careers. As this previous generation of teachers exits the profession through retirement, there have been an increasing proportion of younger and less long-term teachers entering the teaching force (Johnson, 2004). In addition to this dramatic shift in teacher demographics, this wave of personnel change is accompanied by a generation of novice teachers with different

perceptions about the purposes of schools, and a different perspective of their role in the teaching and learning continuum.

The deviation in recent years from the more traditional preparation requirements, routes, and entry into the teaching profession have created disagreement over what qualifies an individual to become a teacher. The incongruity in thought on this issue has led researchers and policymakers to investigate the quality and effectiveness of varied teacher preparation models, in the hopes that consensus can be found and a determination can be made as to which models produce the best effects for both teachers and students. An attention to this level of the education system was never considered for previous generations of teachers. We are now in an era where the past inattention to the critical factors that are influencing schools and students has produced effects that are largely detrimental to future generations. This conundrum points to teacher preparation as an area that has received considerable attention in recent years, but merits further discussion in relation to the teacher retention crisis.

The Impact of Teacher Preparation on Leadership and Teacher Retention

The levels and types of teacher preparation held by novice teachers have never been more diverse, causing modes of preparation to become a prominent issue for consideration in recent years. Darling-Hammond (2010) draws an analogy between training in the medical field in the early 20th century to the current state of teacher preparation. The variability and lackluster quality of medical preparation at that time is now an issue that is facing teacher education programs that show a wide range of quality and activity type. Teacher preparation programs run the gamut, from the traditional undergraduate model involving years of coursework and field experiences, to "crash

courses" in theory combined with minimal clinical exposure and "on-the-job" learning, to the latest residency models involving full-time clinical experiences complemented by some level of theoretical orientation. In efforts to define quality teaching, and to ensure that preparation routes are providing novice teachers with the skills and abilities within that definition of quality, educators and policymakers throughout the country are struggling with this problem.

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2007) found that hiring well-prepared teachers reduced first year attrition by 50 percent. Because there are varied definitions of what a well-prepared teacher looks like, it has been a challenge to determine the correct type of professional preparation that is needed for success as a teacher. Recent data indicates that 96 percent of teachers entered the profession through university-based programs and hold a bachelor's degree; 11 percent completed a fifth- year program for teacher certification; 15 percent had a master's degree in education; 4 percent completed alternative certification programs (NCCTQ, 2007). Alternatively, Feistritzer (2008) contends that in some states as many as thirty to forty percent of teachers are being served by alternate routes. This inconsistent data reveals that the teaching force possesses respectable credentials, but there are still distinctions in the ways teachers become credentialed, thus posing concerns about the overall quality of teacher preparedness.

Because traditional sources of teacher preparation were perceived to not be filling the demand for teachers in our nation's schools, alternative routes have popped up throughout the country, in the hope that a more diverse and higher quality pool of teachers would result (Ingersoll, 2004a). Over the last decade, alternative routes have flourished and the field has seen an influx of new programs, some of which offer excellent preparation

and training opportunities (Feistritzer, 1999). Alternative certification routes vary from emergency certification to well-designed programs that focus on the professional needs of individuals who may already have a bachelor's degree and significant professional work experience. Many alternative routes would be what Lortie (1975) considered to be "contingent schooling", training programs aimed at the needs of specific types of individuals, and often those who are already teaching. In fact, about half of the teachers who entered through alternate routes contend that they would not have become teachers if not for this certification option (Feistritzer, 2008). Furthermore, studies show that five year teacher preparation programs have entry and retention rates significantly higher than four year programs, which in turn have higher rates than short term alternative or emergency pathways; these methods also tend to be less expensive once the costs of preparation, recruitment, induction, and replacement due to turnover are taken into account (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999).

It is more practical and cost effective to recruit candidates into high quality preparation programs that prepare them well than to recruit them in ways that leave them unprepared and vulnerable to attrition. Whether through traditional or alternative programs, new teachers need to be trained in content knowledge, learning theory, and instructional strategies. They also need access to materials and opportunities to practice such learning through extensive clinical experiences and structured observations of accomplished teachers (NCTAF, 2007). Many recently surveyed teachers assert that their training put too much emphasis on theory versus more practical classroom issues (NCCTQ, 2007). There is also the issue of conflict between the theoretical knowledge novice teachers bring to the school and the practices endorsed within the school (Good & Brophy, 2008). Darling-

Hammond, et al. (2005) assert that although teachers generally graduate with a solid foundation of teaching skills, curricular vision, and notions of the purposes of public education, they are lacking in integrative skills, which would allow them to enact their skills in different school environments. Gay and Howard (2000) also advocate that multicultural competencies will be prominent in all teacher education programs, such that teachers build competencies from course work to practicum, exit requirements, certification, and into employment.

This trend of focusing more attention on teachers' content knowledge, or what they will teach, as opposed to their pedagogical knowledge, or how they will teach, has created a cadre of teachers who lack needed pedagogical skills (Finn, Kanstoroom, & Petrilli, 1999). "Becoming a good teacher involves the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are brought to fruition in the actual practice of teaching in a context" (Good & Brophy, 2008). Feistritzer (2008) considers the element of on-the-job training, generally a hallmark of alternate routes, to be attractive to career switchers or other types of alternative candidates, as well as having positive effects as teachers enter the classroom context.

Another critical issue is that teaching has variable entry requirements. Some would contend that entry barriers are in effect that prevent high-quality candidates from entering teaching, such as training and certification requirements (Ingersoll, 2004a). Others believe that entry into teaching is not selective enough and that preparation routes lack rigor, breadth, and depth necessary for success in classrooms (NCTAF, 1996; NCTAF 1997). Those who hold this viewpoint share the perception that there is a lack of uniformity in preparation programs and between states.

Recruitment of teachers is often ad hoc. Teacher preparation is uneven and often insufficiently aligned with the needs of contemporary classrooms and diverse learners. Selection and hiring decisions are too often disconnected from either specific school district goals or from a conception of quality teaching. (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999, p. 255)

The impact on schools is such that novice teachers are not properly selected to match their skill-set with the needs of the school, therefore dissatisfaction results both on the part of the school administration and for the novice teacher.

In recent years, states and localities have responded to the teacher shortages by lowering or eliminating standards for entry into the profession rather than to create incentives that will attract and retain high quality educators (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). It is also believed that the profession suffers from relatively low entry bar and a relatively wide entry gate (Etzioni, 1969; Ingersoll, 2000). Teaching is perceived to have a wide "decision range" in which individuals can choose to become a teacher at many points in their life (Ingersoll, 2004a). This set of loose criteria for entrance has the effect of increasing the flow of candidates into the profession, but it may only result in temporary gains, as these are also the teachers who may only be retained for the short-term.

It is clear that the training and certification of new teachers is an issue that requires attention. As schools continue to lose increasing numbers of new teachers annually, it is incumbent on school leaders to craft solutions to the teacher retention problem. By evaluating the quality and effectiveness of incoming teachers, as well as providing them with ample levels of support once they become members of the school community, leaders can likely shape the school-level effects on teachers.

Teacher Retention Overview

Through an historical portrait of teacher retention and a description of the factors that are contributing to the current state of the problem, the preceding section has offered a realistic representation of how schools and the workforce are being shaped by these features. The role of school-level leadership has been highlighted in order to reveal ways in which schools can capitalize on the investments of both teachers and leaders. The impact of leadership goes beyond the teacher quality and retention crisis, and has the potential to largely affect student achievement and schools as a whole. As we shift from a deficit perspective to an asset perspective, it is necessary for researchers and practitioners to acknowledge how an attention to the micropolitics of schools can positively impact this issue of teacher retention. By evaluating the overall leadership of schools, there can be a resulting impact on teacher satisfaction, student achievement, and the culture of schools.

Theoretical Framework for Understanding Teacher Retention: Micropolitical Theory

This section seeks to define and explain theoretical frameworks and their importance in qualitative research. Through examples offered by leading qualitative theorists, the use of theory will be described in detail. The application of theory throughout the research methodology will be addressed. Furthermore, the reasons and methods for selecting such an approach will be explained. Finally, the theoretical framework of micropolitical theory will be described. This framework will be discussed in connection to the study of principal leadership and the resulting effect on novice teachers, along with an explanation of how I intend for these frameworks to support the research.

The Selection of Theoretical Frameworks

In using a theoretical framework, there needs to be an awareness of how the theory makes its entry into the research process, both for the benefit of the researcher and for the readers. Wolcott (1995) refers to this as choosing between "theory first" or "theory later" (p. 187). Regardless of the approach to theory selection, qualitative researchers are highly encouraged to select and use at least one theory to frame their work. The framework should serve as a guide to inform the researcher, rather than to force the emerging research and design process into a specified theory. As such, the selection of a theoretical framework is neither simple nor swift. Researchers must be prepared to read and explore various theoretical frameworks, both within and outside their field of study. Before coming across one that seems to fit their beliefs, a researcher may find many others that are not a good fit. Anfara and Mertz (2006) and Morgan (2006) describe the experience many authors have in which they report an "ah-ha" experience accompanied with finding the theoretical framework they will use; the ideas fit their belief system, made sense, and resonated with their thinking, while also offering them with "ways of thinking" and "ways of seeing" that explored their phenomenon in novel and interesting ways.

Many practicing educators identify with qualitative research and the way a theoretical framework can explain the roles and organizational elements of schools (Harris, 2006). Within the social sciences, researchers can choose from many theories because the types of phenomena being studied can be viewed from multiple perspectives or lenses. Therefore, researchers should not be limited to using one theory at a time. Theory should facilitate the inquiry process, complementing the methodology, rather than being a

hindrance to the process. In their conscious efforts to search for and select a theory, researchers should think about what they need and hope to find to support their work.

The Selection of Theory for the Study

In my study on teacher retention, tenets of micropolitical theory have been drawn upon to guide the case study research design, as well as to influence the interpretation of findings. In my situation, I had a long-term interest in teacher retention and had done an extensive amount of reading over the years about the potential causes for attrition in schools. Throughout my reading of the varied literature, I came across many feasible reasons for this phenomenon, however none of these reasons ever seemed to directly discuss school leadership. I had a hunch that the school principal had something to do with the variable rates of retention that were happening in schools, but this was never explicitly addressed in the literature.

I began to read a lot of different articles and texts, both in and out of the field of educational administration, and I came across an interesting theory when I was doing some reading for a Politics of Education course. I read the chapter *Beyond Pluralistic Patterns of Power: Research on the Micropolitics of Schools* by Betty Malen and Melissa Vincent Cochran, and had an "ah-ha" moment in reading about micropolitics. I thought maybe I had found the theory that would provide structure and guidance for my study design and interpretive thinking. Malen and Cochran's (2008) notion is that authoritative parameters and power structures are at work in schools, and those power differentials have effects on teachers through their designated responsibilities, the distribution of resources, and the various policies that are enacted upon them. This idea seemed to align with my thoughts about the relationship between principals and novice teachers.

Another component of school micropolitics described by Malen and Cochran (2008) was that of conflict and the resulting tensions between educators; they focused their discussion on site-based governance and the opportunities, or lack thereof, for teacher involvement and participation in the decision-making process. While they were centered on the more formal ways in which micropolitics were evidenced in schools, I began to think about the informal micropolitical activity that occurs in schools. So began my interest in learning more about micropolitics of schools, and I started investigating the other literature that addressed this theory, primarily seeking out research that focused on the informal and less obvious displays of micropolitics. As discussed in the next section, I will describe the theoretical framework in more detail, and will outline the elements of the theory that will be used to frame my study on teacher retention.

Description of Theoretical Framework for the Study

Micropolitical Theory

Schools are replete with micropolitical content, whether defined in positive or negative terms (Blase & Blase, 2002) and teachers and administrators are immersed in this political world, possibly unbeknownst to them. As a result, the patterns of formal power and informal influence that are at play in schools have implications for leadership and decision-making practices, which in turn can have either a positive or a negative impact on teacher satisfaction and the resulting retention rates for novice teachers.

Micropolitical theory has been characterized in many ways over the years. Beginning in the 1960s with the seminal work on the micropolitics of public administration and management, there has been an historical presence of micropolitics in education (Blase & Blase, 2002). The theory began by looking at the role of power in organizations.

Iannaconne (1975) became one of the early theorists to specifically address the micropolitics of education, discussing the power of various stakeholder groups in schools, such as administrators, teachers, and students. About a decade later, Hoyle (1982, 1986) further explored the power strategies used by organizational participants to achieve their interests. Hoyle (1982) described the micropolitical world of occupational life in which "individuals and groups in organizational contexts seek to use their resources of power and influences to further their interests" (p. 88). Ball (1987) then presented a broad political theory of the school as an organization that focused on conflict, domination, and group behavior, as related to the maintenance of administrative control and political ideologies.

Another decade later saw Blase and Anderson (1995) enter the micropolitical arena, contending that "most principals are oriented towards control of teachers, although the strategies they use to achieve such control range from openly directive and authoritarian to diplomatic and subtle" (p.11). Research on the micropolitics of schools over the last decade has seen a continued influence of Blase and colleagues' work.

Micropolitics can be defined in one way as "the immediate, ongoing, dynamic interaction between and among individuals which occurs at all levels of public education" (Eilertsen, Gustafson, & Salo, 2008, pp. 295-6). A micropolitical perspective portrays schools as mini-political systems "nested in multi-level governmental structures that set authoritative parameters for the play of power at the site level," (Malen & Cochran, 2008, p. 149). Iannaconne (1975) offered a much simpler definition, stating that micropolitics within educational systems are the events and interactions that actually take place in and around the school. Blase (1991) offers still a different definition, in that micropolitics is "the use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals in

organizations...Both cooperative and conflicting actions and processes are part of the realm of micropolitics" (p. 11). Furthermore, Blase (1991) states that:

Micropolitics is about power and how people use it to influence others and to protect themselves. It is about conflict and how people compete with each other to get what they want. It is about cooperation and how people build support among themselves to achieve their ends...The micropolitical perspective presents practicing administrators and scholars alike with fresh and provocative ways to think about human behavior in schools. (pp. 1-2)

The range of definitions offered demonstrates the complex nature of micropolitical theory, especially as it is applied to the complicated context of schools. In the current study, I have defined micropolitics in a way that combines the definitions presented by several researchers and to specifically attend to the power differential between teachers and administrators, often displayed through the *school hierarchy*. The elements of *collegiality* **and** *conflict*, and their related sub-themes, were an essential element of my definition because I was interested in understanding how the presence of one or both of these interaction types could impact the school's *organizational culture*, the *interpersonal relations* within the school, and the decisions that are made by teachers and leaders in the school. My definition of school micropolitics also related to *teacher traits* and the principal's leadership capacity, specifically her ability to engage in instructional leadership to guide the overall *academic instruction* at Smith Elementary School, and the attention to *procedural events* at the school. Finally, I coined the term *neutralizing events* to describe the actions and interactions that occur within a school that do not have the effect of tipping the balance toward or against positive micropolitics. All of these critical components were

considered in my definition of school micropolitics because I believe that as a result of these and other occurrences in schools, novice teacher satisfaction and resulting retention rates may be either positively or negatively influenced.

Micropolitics and the Organization of Schools

Public schools are complex, with each class, school, and community offering a distinct combination of social conditions. The school as an organization includes both formal and informal political processes and a political culture that can dramatically influence school outcomes, including teaching and learning (Blase & Blase, 2002). Blase and Anderson (1995) assert that "any micropolitical strategy can be used in an authentic or manipulative manner, depending on the larger context of the micropolitical environment of the school or school district" (p. 115). As a result, micropolitics can either be viewed as positive or negative given the unique context and the ways in which individuals exert their power.

Ball (1987) contends that control is exerted through formal structures and the enforcement of policies and rules, being position-oriented rather than person-oriented. The micropolitical perspective tends to focus on the strategic use of political tactics in schools that have an impact on policy, practice, and overall leadership (Greenfield, p. 163).

On the other hand, Blase and Anderson (1995) contend that "power in organizations is seldom exercised in overt, observable ways" (p. 138). Galbraith (1983) presents the notion of conditioned or normative power, in which subtle conditioning is used so people come to believe that "what is" is the way it "should" be. "Power is more commonly embedded in the work process itself and the organizational vocabulary through which the work is defined," (Blase & Anderson, p. 138). Furthermore, many micropolitical

interactions are "submerged, quiet, unstated, and even unnoticed" (Marshall, 1991, p. 143); because micropolitics tends to center around the avoidance of overt conflict, such interactions are at times seen as part of the normal routine of schools. Marshall (1991) further contends that the privatization of conflicts in schools makes data collection difficult because educators may not even be overtly aware of, or able to articulate their micropolitical behavior.

The micropolitical perspective challenges traditional-rational theories of organizations that highlight clear, shared values and goals, formal power arrangements, and an objective notion of organizational life (Parsons, 1951; Taylor, 1947). Instead micropolitical theory highlights the diversity of interests and goals of site actors, which can result in conflict, power struggles, and differences of opinion on how things should be done in schools. Micropolitical theory offers a "new lens for understanding collaborative reforms in schools by uncovering power, influence, conflict, and negotiating processes between individuals and groups in schools" (Achinstein, 2002, p. 422). This unique approach to understanding schools and the important players that influence teaching and learning is an important way to challenge the status quo.

Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002b) discuss the notion of micropolitical literacy, which includes three aspects of professional learning. Educators must have a base level of knowledge about the school as an organization, which allows them to see, interpret, and understand the micropolitics inherent in different situations. Teachers also utilize an instrumental aspect of micropolitical literacy to engage a repertoire of strategies and tactics to achieve their own goals within schools. This operational type of micropolitics gives teachers a way to establish, protect, and restore desirable working conditions for

themselves within the unique context of their school. Moreover, the experiential aspect of micropolitical literacy relates to the degree of satisfaction a teacher feels about his or her place in the school and is also associated with the range of emotions felt by teachers as they navigate the micropolitical environment.

Mawhinney (1999) uses a graphic representation to distinguish between the micro and macro activities of organizations. In particular, the school as an organization has the micro features of tasks and resources, structures, and culture and climate (Mawhinney, 1999; Webb, 2008), as evidenced in Figure 1.

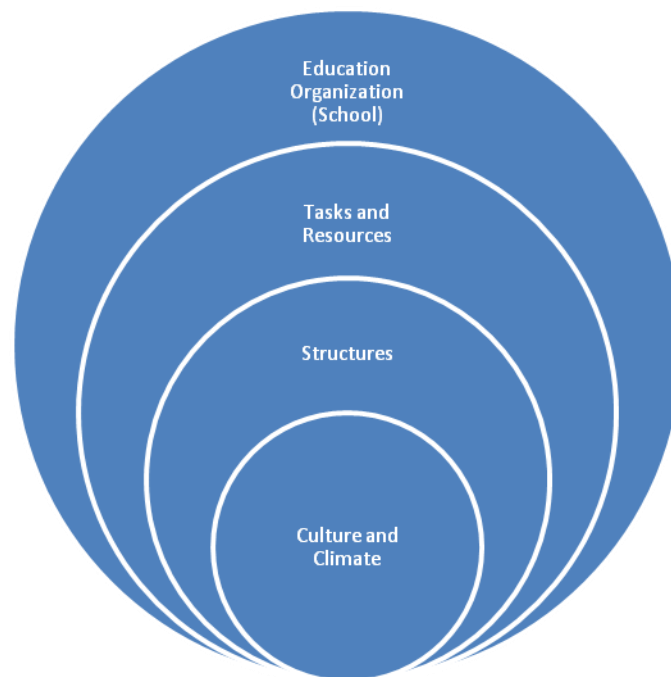


Figure 1: Representation of micro-environments in education (Mawhinney, 1999)

Within the micro-level organization of schools, there are distinct patterns of behavior and influence. There are also personal and collectively shared understandings that are intertwined with the history of the school (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002b). Schein (1992) defines organizational culture as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (1992, p. 12). An integrated and professional culture exists in which there is a distinctive blend of formal and informal norms, values, and support structures that are widely accepted and have the potential to advance collegiality and professional growth in the school's culture (Kardos, Johnson, Peske, Kauffman, & Liu, 2001). Moreover, "the school as an organization lives by certain traditions and habits, or more or less subtle power relations between (groups of) school members, with different interests. In other words, the beginning teacher is confronted with a micro-political reality in his/her job situation," (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002b, p. 107). The micropolitics that face a teacher on his or her initial entry into the school environment are influential in setting the stage for future experiences.

As new teachers are inducted into these professional cultures, the experiences they have are critical because they can confirm or deny new teachers' choice of occupation in life and also set a base for future professional development (McDonald and Elias, 1983). These organizational and professional cultures are related to the micropolitics of schools, and are largely influenced by school administrators.

Micropolitics and Novice Teachers

The unique experiences of novice teachers are informed by the wide and varied contexts from which these teachers come. Often, the beliefs of new teachers are formed by their preservice learning as well as their overall beliefs about human interactions. These beliefs are developed over a lifetime of learning, observing, and interacting both in and out of schools (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002b; Rust, 1994) and have the effect of defining a teachers' professional self and his or her subjective educational theory. One's self-image as a novice teacher may be strongly linked to their perception of self as a learner, using their own school experiences as the basis for their instructional choices, making the assumption that their students possess similar learning styles, aptitudes, interests and problems as their own (Kagan, 1992). Over time, teachers cultivate their professional self, a personal conception of themselves as a teacher, and their subjective educational theory, a personal system of knowledge and beliefs about the job (Kelchtermans, 1993). They also gain insight about the profession through the course of their training and through the practical experiences in school settings, as well as through their experiences with school leaders, colleagues, parents, family and friends (Kelchtermans, 1993). As a related perspective, Erwin's subjective theory describes the patterns of staff hiring policies in which schools select teachers on the basis of knowing who you are and where you come from (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002); the match between an individual's personal credo and the desired professional expectations may likely lead to an increased chance of being hired.

The front stage behaviors of teaching are the observable teaching activities that individuals have witnessed and internalized throughout their own experiences as students in schools and classrooms (Lortie, 1975). Based on this information, teachers formulate

their own instructional practices as they recall their own public school upbringing (Schempp, 1989). However, new teachers fail to prepare for the backstage behaviors of teaching, which involve the balance of myriad daily demands, classroom management, the planning needed to make learning possible, and the networking required to develop support systems for survival in schools (Rust, 1994). The term “praxis shock” refers to the notion that teachers are confronted with the realities of being a classroom teacher, and those experiences either challenge or confirm their ideologies about teaching (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002b, p. 105). Hargreaves (1995) describes professional development for teachers as encompassing the knowledge and skills of teaching, but also to include a moral, emotion, and political dimension that cannot be undermined. Moreover, “although teacher education programs may give some attention to the cultural and social dimensions of teaching, the micropolitics of teaching has been virtually ignored. This point is particularly significant, since micropolitics is pervasive in the classroom, the school, and the community” (Blase, 1997, pp. 962-3). It is important that preparation for teachers, both before they enter schools and after they are in schools, attends to the micropolitical experience as well as the varied teaching activities that are commonly addressed.

Despite having a specific set of knowledge about self and the profession, new teachers tend to enter their career with a level of competence for teaching a curriculum but “largely unaware of the organizational, administrative, and interpersonal forces that are likely to influence their lives in schools” (Rust, 1994, p. 216). Kuzmic (1994) contends that beginning teachers may be unprepared to deal with the unique organizational life of schools, which includes political pressures and the demands of conformity. Expectations about roles teachers should play in schools, some explicit and others implicit, have both

positive and negative implications for novice teachers. Often, the failure to meet implicit demands could result in lowered status or loss of position within the school (Schempp, Sparkes & Templin, 1993).

Understanding and adapting to school culture can be quite distinct from learning to teach children in classrooms (Schempp, Sparkes & Templin, 1993). Because of their lack of understanding of the micropolitical forces at work in schools, novice teachers often struggle. Beginning teachers lack "useful understandings of the contexts in which they would work...and consistent, grounded, and accurate understandings of themselves as teachers" (Bullough, Knowles, and Crow, 1989, p.231). Because teacher socialization and influence can happen at the classroom or school level (Zeichner et al., 1987), the success of new teachers is connected to their capacity for juggling the multiple demands of functioning within a school.

Many beginning teachers are largely unaware of their role in a school and their ability to exercise power within the school culture. Because of this unawareness, new teachers often sense a lack of collegiality, which in turn prevents them from trusting in other teachers and the principal (Rust, 1994). Because social power is a part of the daily functioning and long-term acceptance in a school, new teachers should be cognizant of their place and the place of others within the school system. Each member's level of status is related to his or her level of influence over the thoughts and actions of the group. As a result, "new members change as they affiliate with an institution and the organization changes as new members usher in fresh ideas and unique ways of acting," (Schempp, Sparkes & Templin, 1993, p. 448). Beginning teachers also impact the context of a school

in many ways as they make an entrance and learn to navigate the micropolitics that are before them.

The interrelated nature of the novice teacher's personal and professional lives has an effect on one's self esteem and job motivation. At times, beginning teachers recognize discrepancies between their own philosophies and impetus for teaching and the dominant culture in the school (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002b). The motives for selecting the teaching profession and the decision as to whether a novice teacher will stay or leave a job, can all be related back to the demands placed on them, the social status of the career, and the routine nature of the job (Kelchtermans, 1993). As a result of this connection between a novice teacher's level of satisfaction and his or her resulting retention in the profession, it is necessary to evaluate the ways in which teachers are transitioned into their teaching career. "Because of its potential for dramatic change, the induction of new members represents an important item on the political agenda for schools" (Schempp, Sparkes & Templin, 1993, p. 448). In the mind of a beginning teacher, their primary responsibility is to gain power over students through discipline and classroom management, in order to establish their role as an authority figure over students (Waller, 1932). Furthermore, beginning teachers often believe that their professional competencies are evaluated only on a limited and partial basis (Kelchtermans, 1993). Through the micropolitics of induction, newcomers learn the cultural norms that define the practices of daily school life, in which patterns of power are included. In order to be successful, new teachers must understand the power differentials within the school and the ways that they themselves could secure power and positions within the school culture.

Teacher-to-Teacher Micropolitical Interactions

To comprehend how micropolitics are manifested in schools, one must have an understanding of the type of peer interactions that occur. Interactions with colleagues are one source of influence for new teachers. Beginning teachers benefit from opportunities to share concerns and ideas, as well as to ask questions of colleagues (Greenfield, 1991; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002b). Some teachers also profit from learning from their colleagues' experiences and competence, leading to higher levels of collaboration, satisfaction, and professionalism for themselves (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002a). Shared leadership is fostered through cooperation among teachers, and positive energy results from teachers offering recognition and sharing in the success of others (Greenfield, 1991).

For veteran teachers, the induction of new teachers helps them to play an active role in the transition process, and also helps to preserve their own sets of interests (Ball, 1987). Moreover, these veteran teachers have "established traditions and perceptions that novice teachers must accept, reject, modify, or accommodate," (Schempp, Sparkes & Templin, 1993, p. 464). Exchange theories are used to describe how teachers attempt to maximize the gains and minimize the costs of their interactions as a way to reach desired outcomes (Anderson, 1991, p. 134).

Alternatively, some teachers describe an environment in which their colleagues were not interested in working together, but rather remained disengaged and stayed in their own classrooms (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002a). In addition, there are instances in which the differences between colleagues may be greater than their commonalities; this is often more true in secondary schools with their divided relations between departments (Hargreaves, 1991, Woods, 1990). In either case, novice teachers' early experiences are

affected by these interactions, or lack thereof, which can result in disparate levels of satisfaction.

Cultural codes, or regimes of truth, as defined by Foucault (1970) are informally transmitted to novice teachers during meetings or other informal interactions. "Meetings were a primary platform for executing school duties...Meetings served as important locations in the micropolitics of teacher induction...meetings and school functions offered an opportunity to be viewed by colleagues, administrators, and others as part of the school culture" (Schempp, Sparkes & Templin, 1993, p. 460). The social and cultural norms that are inherent in these interactions demonstrate for teachers how the hierarchy is structured and where they can find their place in that hierarchy. The micropolitics of teacher relationships involve an understanding of the roles played by different members of the school culture, the messages sent between the members, and the strategies that can be used to gain influence among those members (Schempp et al., 1993). As a way of becoming part of the culture, some new teachers engage in strategic compliance, such as joining a committee as a way to acquire knowledge and develop relationships (Schempp et al., 1993).

Teacher-to-teacher relationships are important in fostering collaboration and teamwork within schools. "Collegiality among teachers and between teachers and their principals has been advanced as one of the most fruitful strategies for fostering teacher development" (Hargreaves, 1991, p. 46). These relationships allow teachers to learn and share with one another, rather than learning from experts. Principals and teachers acknowledge that "power is exercised over teachers, but also through them, to the extent that they are motivated to pursue organizational goals" (Blase & Anderson, 1995, p. 104).

This approach to leadership centers on the ability of principals to motivate and mobilize groups that can organize and carry out tasks that benefit the school. Hargreaves (1991) describes some productive forms of collegiality such as team teaching, collaborative planning, peer coaching, mentor relationships, professional dialogue, and collaborative action research. On the other hand, contrived collegiality is a micropolitical tactic in which administrators regulate or compel teachers to engage in particular activities within the school (Hargreaves, 1991). Because novice teachers are likely to be influenced by others, the micropolitical perspective points to the difficulty in protecting individual rights, especially in the face of group pressure.

As seen through the literature on the micropolitics of teacher-to-teacher interactions, collegiality is an important element of a school's culture, and one that can have an impact on new teachers. Because collegial relationships have been largely explored as part of the teacher retention research, there is a strong connection between the micropolitical climate and the resulting levels of teacher satisfaction and ensuing retention rates.

Principal-to-Teacher Micropolitical Interactions

Through my study on teacher retention, I explored the ways that principal-teacher interactions were manifested for new teachers and whether those relationships had a resulting effect on teacher retention. Both principals and teachers routinely employ a range of strategies and tactics to achieve their goals and protect their interests (Blase & Blase, 2002). It is through their motivations, actions, and resulting effects that schools become micropolitical environments.

While teachers use political strategies and activities as they navigate and mediate their differences, identify which ideas and members are accepted as part of their community, and come to a shared educational ideology in their schools (Achinstein, 2002), they often do so within the parameters of the school's culture and micropolitical context. Because "schools are loosely coupled and bureaucratic forms of control are seldom effective, the relationship between principals and teachers is essentially a political one with the control versus autonomy battle being fought in subtle and obvious ways" (Anderson, 1991, p. 120). Moreover, principals define the reality of life in schools create symbolic meaning through the use of language (Anderson, 1991).

Some teachers recognize the potential costs and consequences of taking on the principal and comply with the principal's preferences (Malen & Cochran, 2008). Particularly as a new teacher, they often function within the boundaries set by principals. While there may be opportunities for influence over school policies, priorities, and practices, novice teachers' roles are largely dependent on the level of involvement permitted or encouraged by the principal. Even within their daily interactions, principals and teachers manage the various tensions they experience through cordial, ceremonial exchanges that tend to affirm the power of the principal (Malen & Cochran, 2008). Some teachers remain silent, holding back their opinions over concerns that they may create controversy or may jeopardize their role or potential success in the school (Schempp, Sparkes & Templin, 1993). As a result of the micropolitical and hierarchical nature of the school environment, a binary relationship between authority and influence is often enacted within schools (Webb, 2008), in which principals generally hold the most power.

“Researchers widely confirm the principal’s central role in establishing, reinforcing, and realigning the school culture,” (Bryk, Sebring, Kerbow, Rollow, & Easton, 1998; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Fullan, 1991). Principals also have the authority to strategically manage and control the school's agenda, information flow, work assignments, personnel evaluations, and professional development opportunities (Malen & Cochran, 2008). The organizational nature of schools, combined with the hierarchical system among site actors is described by Ingersoll (2003) as hierarchical and controlling of multiple factors in the school setting. Despite the degree of control held by principals, they still have the potential to use their power in inappropriate ways.

Since the roles and responsibilities of the principalship often align with either management tasks or instructional leadership activities, there is frequently an imbalance in how principals decide to allocate their time and efforts. There may also be a disparity between a principal's personal and professional goals and those of the district. At one time, the principalship was more of a "principal-teacher" role, but it has increasingly become less loyal to teachers and more focused on the status differential between the two roles (Blase & Anderson, 1995). Moreover, teachers tend not to view principals as experts on classroom practice; their lack of respect for the principals' professional and instructional knowledge undermines the authority they carry with their title, (Biklen, 1983; Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980). In addition, teacher unions have had a negative effect on the relationships between teachers and administrators, making collaboration between the two groups difficult (Marshall, 1991). Since teachers and principals see the world differently, conflicts can arise within the micropolitical environment of a school.

Meeting the material interests of teachers is one type of management task that principals engage in. By granting access to teaching materials, funds, infrastructure, and time for job preparation, principals wield power and influence over teachers which can impact teachers' job performance, especially for novice teachers (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002b). Since teachers appear to favor principals who demonstrate leadership and engagement in instructional activities, principals are wise to focus their efforts in this area. By emphasizing autonomy and choice for teachers, rather than control and competition, principals can influence the micropolitical organization in constructive ways (Blase & Blase, 1999). Through an active physical presence and responsiveness in the school building, principals demonstrate for new teachers the importance of administrative support and collegiality for professional growth and instructional improvement. When used for productive purposes, the principal's authority can be a great benefit to teachers and schools. On the other hand, when used in impractical ways, their power can have serious negative effects on teachers and schools.

Beyond management and instructional leadership, school principals have the responsibility for exercising moral leadership in their schools. A principal's moral orientation impacts the daily occurrences in a school and can shape the micropolitical stance of a school. "This moral commitment overrides bureaucratic mandates or directives and influences how teachers and principals carry out their beliefs" (Greenfield, 1991, p. 169). Moral influence is powerful because teachers recognize the meaningful connection between their own values and those held by the principal. Etzioni (1961) describes compliance theory in which administrators use their power to promote teachers' moral involvement, encouraging their compliance with school norms based on their connection to

the ideals of the organization. This moral connection can have important consequences for the school and its students. On the contrary, many teachers align their personal and professional beliefs to the expectations that are explicitly and implicitly communicated by principals, mainly to avoid conflict or consequences (Blase & Anderson, 1995). By enacting a moral imperative, principals must pay attention to teachers' socio-emotional and moral concerns so that they may better understand their interpersonal relations (Greenfield, 1991). When principals take into consideration the daily lives, challenges, pressures, and frustrations of teachers, and learn how to react with sensitivity, they can bridge some of the gaps that exist.

Research demonstrates that teachers have specific views about what characterizes an effective principal. "Effective principals articulate their visions, set their goals, explain their expectations, and in large part, determine the means to achieve such ends. Simply stated, teachers are normatively influenced 'to buy into the principal's agenda'" (Blase & Anderson, 1995, p. 106). Teachers assert that authenticity and trust are two important traits of principals; they also respected principals who modeled optimism, consideration, and honesty; they also favored principals who created a safe environment in which teachers could speak openly (Blase & Anderson, 1995). A principal who regularly talks with teachers can do so to promote reflection, make suggestions, or offer feedback and praise. Communication appears to be critical in fostering positive relations between teachers and the principal. Doing so in a clear and timely manner, as well as in constructive ways that take the teachers' personal and professional needs into consideration, principals can demonstrate to teachers that they promote a collaborative approach to leadership (Blase & Anderson, 1995).

Blase and Blase (1998; 1999) discussed several positive actions taken by principals within schools. Principals promote professional growth by offering advice and intervention with instructional issues, supporting collaboration, facilitating coaching relationships, making time for peer connections, and applying the principles of adult learning, growth, and development to professional development activities (Blase & Anderson, 1995; Blase & Blase, 1999; Greenfield, 1991; Hargreaves, 1991; Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996; Malen & Cochran, 2008). Organization and efficiency were also seen as traits that exemplify how principals show respect for teachers' time, particularly with respect to faculty meetings and expectations about paperwork, (Blase & Anderson, 1995). Through the development of structural conditions that support teaching and learning, novice teachers are likely to receive the resources and support that are needed for their success.

In these examples of instructional leadership and positive micropolitical interactions, teachers are engaged in discussions of alternatives, not simply following directives or criticisms and teachers and principals are working together as a community of learners (Blase & Blase, 1999). In one study of an effective principal, Ashby (1996) identified strategies and tactics used to influence teachers and instruction, and recognized that the principal rarely resorted to coercive strategies, instead appealing to teachers' sense of professional obligations. This same principal further minimized the level of resistance in the school by hiring teachers whose values were consistent with her professional values and those of the community (Blase & Blase, 1999). Blase and Roberts (1994) contend that these positive influence strategies, most often used by open and effective principals, should serve as the benchmark for positive micropolitics in schools.

Despite the indication that positive and collaborative micropolitical contexts serve schools and their stakeholders well, there has been substantial evidence to the contrary over the years. The nature of teaching as an isolated profession seems paradoxical, as teachers interact regularly with students, but contact with colleagues may be fleeting, and can have a grave effect on the micropolitics between teachers and principals. In addition, Lieberman and Miller (1990) describe the "power of classroom territoriality," in which teachers appear to have control in their classrooms but beyond those walls, they are able to exert little external power within the school context.

Traditionally, principals have been control-oriented and have used a range of direct, overt, and even blatant strategies as well as indirect and subtle strategies to manage teachers (Blase & Blase, 2002). Some principals have resorted to using sanctions to exert control over resources, such as materials, equipment, space, and funds and work conditions, such as class size, student type, number of courses, and planning periods. Furthermore, teachers are often limited in their opportunities for participation in decision-making and in accessing opportunities for advancement (Blase, 1989). The manipulation of teachers through these mechanisms offers further proof of the micropolitical nature of schools and the resulting negative impact on novice teachers. "Schools are characterized by the diversity of interests and goals resulting in uncertainty or disunity when considering the choices of what ought to be achieved and how things ought to be done" (Eilertsen et al., 2008, p. 295). A look beyond the conflicts and influence prevalent in administrator-teacher micropolitics will likely lead to a greater understanding of the way in which cooperation and collaborative efforts can result in positive ends for both teachers and principals.

Race and Diversity in a Micropolitical Setting

As Darling-Hammond and Berry asserted, social justice in schools and society is both an intended outcome and a descriptive characteristic of multicultural education (1999). The activities of teaching and learning are largely influenced by the demographics of a school's population, both in the diverse makeup of the student body and in the way teachers must adapt instruction to suit the needs of an increasingly diverse society. Students of color are the majority in 70 of the 130 largest school districts in the United States with student populations of 36,000 or more; furthermore, 86% of elementary and secondary teachers are European Americans but only 64% of K-12 students are, with the other 36% distributed among groups of color; at fifteen percent, the proportion of minority teachers in public schools is far less than that of minority students (over 33%) (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999, p. 258).

There are many teachers currently in schools who grew up in largely white communities and are teaching in largely non-white settings with which they have had little experience (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). Because of this mismatch in past experience and current reality, teachers often structure their curriculum and learning environments in ways that mirror the homogeneous environment where they were educated. Gay and Howard (2000) contend that by promoting the use of some specific pedagogical skills, teachers will be better prepared to meet the needs of a diverse group of students. Some of these instructional strategies include alternative instructional techniques to achieve common learning outcomes, matching teaching styles to learning styles of diverse ethnic groups, and creating climates and communities conducive to learning for diverse groups.

As a whole, most teachers are unprepared for the realities of the schools in the United States, especially those that are in the most need and in which the most opportunities exist. This further exacerbates the recruitment and retention challenges being faced by school systems, but it also signals to educators and policymakers that attention to the varied factors of public schools is critical.

Overview of the Study and Connection to Theoretical Frameworks

The literature outlines myriad factors involved in teacher retention and attrition, including salaries, induction, resources, and teachers' levels of preparation. These large-scale problems have been widely studied, and yet adequate solutions have not been found. On the other hand, the micro-level problems that are related to teacher retention, such as culture, autonomy, and collegiality, have received less attention over the years. School principals directly and indirectly control the relationships and events that occur in schools, and they have a responsibility for positively influencing the teachers under their leadership. The micropolitics of schools, which involve the complex relationships between principals and teachers, have the potential to either encourage or deter teachers from remaining in the teaching profession.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the retention and attrition patterns in two elementary schools, as influenced by the micropolitics of those schools; in particular, principal decision-making processes, leadership activities, and the relationship between principals and teachers will be studied. A case study design was used to study the context of one elementary school while concentrating on the phenomenon of teacher retention. Throughout the study, I will aim "to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon" (Merriam, 2009, p. 39). Since it is impossible to

separate a phenomenon's variables from their context, I intend to use description to build a foundation through the identification of micropolitical processes, relationships, and events, as they are related to the issue of teacher retention.

This study has both theoretical and practical significance. Teacher retention is an issue that has been studied extensively over the past few decades, and no concrete conclusions have been drawn about how to permanently address the problem that is plaguing our public schools. There is a lack of substantial research that points to an association between a principal's relations with novice teachers and the resulting effect this may have on teacher retention. By developing an understanding of the micropolitics involved in school leadership, I expect that evidence be available to demonstrate why some teachers are making the decision to stay in the profession while others are choosing to leave. The data gleaned through this study will not only add to the body of research on teacher retention, but it will also offer practical solutions for school principals as to how to best retain teachers under their leadership.

Summary

This chapter offered an overview of the literature on teacher retention and on the major tenets of micropolitical theory. Connections have been made between the background information on teacher retention and the theoretical framework of micropolitics. This intersection of information will be used as a foundation for the study on teacher retention.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter explains the methodology and process that was utilized to investigate the school-level leadership and micropolitical context in one elementary school, and the resulting effect on novice teacher retention. This chapter is divided into six main sections. The first section of this chapter describes the context of the study, to include the school and community context and the means of gaining access. Second, the qualitative methodology is described and the study design is outlined, with attention to the use of micropolitical theory. Next, the data sources are outlined, to include sampling techniques and types of data that were collected. After that, data collection methods and procedures are presented, including a description of interviewing techniques, observation, and document analysis, as well as the ways trustworthiness was established. Then, the plan for data analysis and the interpretation and generation of findings are presented to readers. The final two sections of this chapter explain the role of the researcher and the presentation of the study's participants.

Context of the Study

National data from the Schools and Staffing Survey's Teacher Follow-up Survey indicated that both elementary and secondary schools are experiencing similar retention levels.¹ Other research has shown mixed results on teacher retention rates at the secondary level, particularly with respect to content area instruction (Ingersoll, 2007; NCCTQ, 2007).

¹ According to the most recent data from the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS), in 2004-05 elementary schools posted an 8.5% attrition rate, while secondary schools posted an 8.6% attrition rate (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), 2004-05).

In particular, 28 percent of secondary school teachers surveyed stated that they would leave the classroom for another career in education and 9 percent would leave the field altogether; furthermore, 30 percent of teachers did not think they would remain in the profession longer than ten years (NCCTQ, 2007). Because there are other variables at work in these two types of schools, it was necessary to select a context that would produce meaningful results for this study. An elementary school was selected as the focus for this study because in keeping with the assets-based approach, which focuses on the strengths of a situation, it was necessary to evaluate a school that could have a propensity for specific micropolitical factors, such as strong leadership, administrative support, positive school culture, and collegiality (Ashby, 1996; Blase & Anderson, 1995; Blase & Blase, 1999; Blase & Roberts, 1994).

There are some central differences in the two school types that would make a micropolitical study of secondary school more complex. The departmentalization of high schools and division of teachers into content area teams tends to create divisions that could be problematic for a study of this nature. Furthermore, the administrative structure of high schools makes it difficult to determine which administrator holds primary responsibility for the micropolitics of school and the induction of novice teachers. In addition to administrative support, collegiality is widely variable for secondary school teachers. Only 26 percent of novice secondary school teachers affirm that they "get excellent advice from fellow teachers on lesson plans and teaching techniques, compared with 39 percent of elementary school teachers" (NCCTQ, 2007, p. 12). The same recent study of new teacher perceptions reported that "while majorities of all new teachers say they are generally satisfied with their administrators and fellow teachers, new high school and middle school

teachers are significantly less content" (NCCTQ, 2007, p. 12). The varied challenges that high school teachers face, including class assignments, student behavior, and time and resources, can all be cause for a wide range of teacher and administrator experiences (Ingersoll, 2003c; Ingersoll, 2007; NCCTQ, 2007). Finally, elementary and secondary teachers tended to enter the profession for different reasons. While elementary teachers were apt to enter teaching with a desire to help children, high school teachers were more inclined to enter with a passion for their content area. These divergent motivations, combined with the fact that high school teachers believed they were less likely to be positively influencing their students (NCCTQ, 2007), can potentially influence their satisfaction.

On the other hand, elementary schools appeared to demonstrate a higher propensity for teacher retention, due in part to the unique characteristics of teachers at this level, but also because of the micropolitical context of an elementary school. Sixty-eight percent of elementary teachers contended that teaching was a lifelong career choice for them and while 25 percent of teachers claimed that they would be likely to leave the profession within the first ten years, their reasons for leaving varied greatly (NCCTQ, 2007). Elementary teachers were more likely than secondary teachers to feel confident about the work they do. Most influential were the teacher satisfaction differentials at the elementary and secondary level; relationships with administrators and fellow teachers were cited as primary reasons for the dissatisfaction on the part of secondary teachers. Elementary teachers rated their school administration at 85 percent for providing material resources and at 79 percent for providing instructional leadership, as compared to secondary teachers, who rated material resources at 69 percent and instructional leadership at 65

percent (NCCTQ, 2007). These differences in teacher satisfaction as related to administrative actions and decision-making have an effect on novice teachers and were a central reason for considering the micropolitical factors at an elementary school in this study.

School and Community Context

The case study described took place in a large school district located in a metropolitan area in the eastern United States. The school district is situated in a diverse, dynamic, and professional community located outside a major urban city. The county is the third most populous in the state, and the school district is the second largest in the state. The district mission statement describes a diverse and inclusive school community, committed to high quality educational opportunities, where all students can become effective communicators, problem solvers, and good citizens (School Website, 2011).

The Pre-K-12 enrollment for 2010-2011 was estimated at 79,115 students. Students were served by fifty-five elementary schools, fifteen middle schools, ten high schools, and nine specialized schools. The district's student population was comprised of a diverse demographic, with a population breakdown as follows: White 35.9%; Hispanic 28.5%; African American 20.3%; Asian 7.5%; and two or more races 7.2%. The percentage of students categorized as English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) was at 17.2%; the percentage of students categorized as Special Education is at 16.3%; and the percentage of students receiving subsidized meals was at 33.7% (School Website, 2010). Data on teacher and administrator statistics and demographics indicated that the school district employed over 9,600 employees, including 5,152 teachers and 213 school administrators. The personnel racial demographics were as follows: administrators at the district level are

20.2% African American; 4.3% Hispanic; 75.5% White, while teachers at the district level are 11.2% African American; 3.9% Hispanic, and 79.7% White. Gender breakdowns for the district were as follows: administrators are 22.3% male and 77.7% female, while teachers are 8.3% male and 91.7% female.

More specifically, the school data reflected a demographic that was representative of the district as a whole. The elementary school in the study had a student population of 635 in the 2010-11 school year. The school had the capacity to hold 568 students in a total of 29 classrooms, however there were six trailers in place on the school property, and construction was set to expand the school beginning in fall 2011. The attendance rate for the student body was 95.5% and the average mobility index was at 31.2%. The average class size in grades K-2 was 21 students, while the average class size for grades 3-5 was 25 students.

The student demographics at Smith Elementary School were as follows: 6 % Asian-Pacific Islander; 26.3% African American; 16.5% White/non-Hispanic; 43.9% Hispanic; and 7.2% Other. Additional student characteristics were as follows: 70.6% economically disadvantaged; 48.5% ESOL; 4.5% gifted (grades K-3); 6.4% gifted (grades 4-5); 11.7% special education; and 9.6% Title I. As compared to the overall district demographics, Smith Elementary School had a lower Hispanic population, but was relatively similar in the African American and White populations. The major differences at the school level were seen in the percentage of students who were economically disadvantaged and receiving ESOL services. These factors were important to understanding the overall community context of the school. Two female administrators served the school, one of whom was African American and the other was White. The

instructional personnel was 86% female and 14% male, with 5.3% African American; 82.5% White/non-Hispanic; 8.8% Hispanic; and 3.5% Other. Sixty-eight percent of the instructional personnel held graduate degrees.

The most recent student achievement data was represented in the assessment scores for spring 2010, at the school level and at the district level as presented in Figure 2.

Overall, the students at Smith Elementary School achieved in comparable ways to the students in the district as a whole.

In the last three years, AYP status was as follows: in 2008-09, the school made AYP; in 2009-10, the school did not make AYP; and in 2010-11, the school made AYP. In all three years, the school was fully accredited and in the years 2008-09 and 2010-11, the school was also named a school of excellence for the district.

Math		Reading		Science		Social Studies	
SES	District	SES	District	SES	District	SES	District
95 %	93 %	89 %	84 %	90 %	91 %	95 %	94 %
87 %	88 %	89 %	89 %	n/a	n/a	78 %	86 %
93 %	92 %	84 %	91 %	84 %	85 %	n/a	n/a

Figure 2: Spring 2010 Assessment Scores for SES and District, Grades 3-5

This holistic view of the district and the school describes the context in which the elementary school is situated. The range and diversity of students represented lends this

district and school to a study of this nature because it has the potential to be informative to the local community as well as having some possible applicability to other similar settings.

Gaining Access and Selecting a School

As a researcher and educational consultant in the metropolitan area in which the targeted district is located, I have developed and maintained professional contacts in local school districts. Through those contacts, I was able to gain entry into the district that was selected for the study. I approached a principal of a local school to describe the study's purpose, the ways in which the principal and teachers could support the study, and the benefits to the school and district for their participation. The primary contact of interest was a school principal who was willing to open her school for this study, as well as the district's program evaluation supervisor who mediated approval for the study and entry in to the district and school. The goal for the study was to select an elementary school to meet the following criteria: (a) having an average teacher retention rate of 90% or greater over the last three years²; (b) having at least five teachers who were characterized by novice status (having been in the teaching profession for three years or less); (c) having a principal that has been at the school for at least three years.

The average to high teacher retention designation was based on the most recent data from the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) which indicated that 8.4 % of teachers were movers in 2004-05 (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). In keeping with the national average of 91.6 percent retention, it was important to select a school that had an average retention rate of 90 percent or greater. Smith Elementary School retained an

² This percentage was designated based on the most recent data from the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) which indicates that 8.4 % of teachers were movers in 2004-05 (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), 2004-05).

average of 91 percent of the teachers over the last three years (D. Franklin, personal communication, May, 18, 2011). As compared to recent national data which cited attrition rates between 16 and 20 percent (NCTAF, 2007), Smith's retention data placed the school in the average-high range.

After communicating with the school principal to ensure that the school data matched the requirements for the study, I sought and received approval from the Texas A&M University Institutional Review Board and also sought formal approval to conduct the study in the school district. Once formal approval was obtained by the district, I relied on the principal to select study participants who met the novice teacher criteria. At that juncture, I contacted each of the novice teachers through email, at which time I offered an explanation about the purpose of the study, the amount of time that would be needed for data collection, and plans for using the data (Cresswell, 2007). I shared information about how formal consent would be requested and ways in which their participation would remain confidential. At the initial face-to-face meeting with the teachers, I had them read and sign the consent form for participation in the study.

Study Design

A Qualitative Case Study

Cresswell (2007) and Yin (2009) would agree that a case study is useful in studying an event, a program, or an activity of more than one individual. Further, Yin (2009) contends that within a particular context, the individuals are the unit of analysis and the data gathered is important on a collective rather than an individual level. Because this study focused on micropolitical events that involved individuals within a school, the selected design matches well with the purpose of the research.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the retention pattern in one elementary school, as influenced by the micropolitics of that school; in particular, principal decision-making processes, leadership activities, and the relationship between principals and teachers were studied. A qualitative case study design was used to assess the context of the school while concentrating on the phenomenon of teacher retention. Peshkin (1993) described some goals of qualitative research to include changing behavior, problem finding, clarifying and understanding, or theory development. The primary goal of a case study is to clarify and understand a phenomenon through the application of theory (Peshkin, 1993).

A qualitative approach was selected for this study because the problem at hand required research that was value-based and meaningful (Smith, 1983). Since meaning is embedded in the experiences people have and is mediated through the researcher's own perceptions (Merriam, 1994), it was through a qualitative study that I gained insight into the perspectives of teachers and principal who were impacted by the issue of teacher retention. By viewing the phenomenon from the emic perspective (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007), or as the participants view it, I have attempted to make meaning about the participants' experiences. These perspectives can generally be sought through direct observation, informal conversations, and interviews, all of which were used in this study.

Yin (1984; 2009) defined a case study as an investigation of a contemporary social phenomenon within its real-life context, and through the investigation of multiple data sources. Moreover, Stake (1995) described case study as a choice of what to be studied, the "what" being a bounded system, a single entity or unit, and finite in terms of time or space. The unit of analysis is the aspect of the phenomenon that will be studied across one or

more cases, and the topic of investigation characterizes a case study (Gall et al., 2007; Merriam, 2009).

The present study's focus on the bounded systems of one particular elementary school necessitated the case study method, rather than the topic of teacher retention dictating the unit of analysis. Selecting the case requires that the researcher establish a rationale for purposeful sampling, defining the case's boundaries, time constraints, events, and processes. A researcher can explore a bounded system or multiple bounded systems over time, and through detailed, in-depth data collection that involves multiple sources of information. Because case studies are searching for meaning and understanding, and are highly contextual, the use of this type of qualitative research is appropriate for the study at hand. The context of an elementary school is rich in events and perspectives, which can lead to a thick description that has allowed me to explore the phenomenon of teacher retention and its patterns, themes, and constructs (Gall et al., 2007).

In the analysis of data, the researcher may focus on developing a detailed description of several key issues or themes in order to understand the complexity of the case, but not necessarily for the purpose of generalizing beyond that case (Cresswell, 2007). Throughout the case analysis, the attention to micropolitical theory remained prominent in developing a narrative and in making interpretations. Because the analysis is rich in the context of the case (Cresswell, 2007), readers are able to compare the case being studied with their own situation. The final product includes a narrative that describes the case and case-based themes as related to the research questions.

Anfara and Mertz (2006) contended that it is impossible to observe and describe what happens in natural settings without some theory that guides the researcher in what is

relevant to observe and what name to attach to what is happening. Sampling and design issues must also be matched to the selected theory and units of analysis and desired characteristics of the sample should be consistent with the theory (Boyatzis, 1998). The school and the settings within the school that were chosen for use in the study were done intentionally; in thinking about the tenets of micropolitics, described in Chapter II and further discussed later in this chapter, I decided that certain settings would be more fruitful in producing meaningful data. For example, thinking about the control and hierarchy that may be involved between the principal and teachers, I decided it would be important to observe staff meetings and teacher grade-level meetings. In an attempt to gain information about the academic instruction taking place at the school, I wanted to observe occasions for instructional leadership, which happened during data meetings. Furthermore, as a way to gain richer data about the organizational culture of the school and the interactions between teachers and principal, I observed throughout the school building and made notes about the overall happenings across the building and over time.

Use of Micropolitical Theory

In thinking about teacher retention, and my own beliefs about the causes and implications for this problem, I sought a theoretical orientation to apply to the study. A theoretical orientation is a way of looking at the world and a way of understanding the assumptions people have about what is important and makes the world work (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The selection of theory has the potential to influence many choices throughout the research process and to direct the researcher's thinking about the phenomenon. By viewing the data through a micropolitical lens, I was able to develop a comprehensive understanding of the case in this study. From the methodological planning

of the study through the data collection and analysis, the principles of micropolitical theory grounded my work.

Yin (1994) and Merriam (2009) both contended that case study research requires identifying the theoretical perspective at the outset of the inquiry since it affects the research questions, analysis, and interpretation of findings. In accordance with this philosophy, I structured my research questions with a heavy emphasis on the precepts of micropolitical theory. By aligning the research question with a theoretical framework, the researcher is forced to be accountable to that theory throughout the design of the study (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). Furthermore, I began with the notion that new teachers will thrive when exposed to various types of leadership and when specific administrative supports are present, so I intended to gather information that would either support or refute that notion. Not only was I concerned with whether or not a teacher was supported, but what types of support were offered, how leaders executed that support, and how that made the teacher feel with respect to their satisfaction with the profession. In framing the study in this way, the broader context of school leadership and micropolitics greatly impacted the way in which data collection techniques were structured, as well as the way that teacher perceptions were interpreted during the data analysis phase.

Since administrators and teachers shared their insight about the school context in which they work, their perceptions were critical to my analysis of the issue of teacher retention. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) asserted that the "theory helps data cohere and enables research to go beyond an aimless, unsystematic piling up of accounts" (p. 22). The application of micropolitical theory was also influential during the data analysis stage

because a hallmark of the theory is the way that different site actors perceive the relationships and interactions between individuals and groups.

Data Sources

The data sources for the case study largely centered on the information that was shared by participants. Through interviews and informal conversations, participants provided qualitative data for inclusion in the study. Participants also provided artifacts, both voluntarily and upon request, that complemented the interview data. As part of my observations throughout the course of the study, field notes and reflective notes were used to document details that supplemented interview data and enriched the case study description.

Sampling by Setting

The technique of sampling by setting is an important way of seeking out a specific, organizational, or large-scale context (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Boyatzis, 1998). Boyatzis (1998) defines a specific setting as one that has physical as well as social and political characteristics. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) go further to state that specific settings can only be understood in the historical context of the institutions in which they belong. Sampling by setting was used in this study by taking a look at the larger context of the school district and then looking at several specific settings which were nested in the organizational setting of the elementary school selected for study. Within the elementary school, the specific settings included, but were not limited to, group and individual meetings that took place in classrooms, the principal's office, other administrative offices, staff meeting rooms, the staff lounge, and hallways.

Participant Sampling

In a case study, it is beneficial to engage in purposeful sampling to select study participants. The participants to be interviewed and observed were selected through purposeful sampling (Cresswell, 2007; Gall et al., 2007) such that the principal and I collaborated to select individuals for inclusion in the study who would help to inform an understanding about the central phenomenon in the study (Cresswell, 2007). I provided the principal with the participant criteria and she looked at the teacher data to provide me with a list of novice teachers who fit that criteria. The principal and I also had some discussions about other individuals who could also inform the study, such as the lead mentor. After we made some specific decisions about who I would talk to, the principal introduced me to the teachers and we used email communication to coordinate interview and observation times based on the study's goals and the teachers' availability.

The use of purposeful sampling allowed me to target the population that was best suited to answer the study's research questions. Since the goal of the case study was to look at the impact of a school's micropolitical state on the experience of novice teachers, it was essential to include a clearly defined sample of novice teachers in the study. This group of novice teachers was best poised to describe their own perspectives and share their experiences about being a new teacher at Smith Elementary School.

The sample at the school included one principal, seven novice teachers, and one lead mentor. For the purposes of this study, a novice teacher was defined as an individual who has worked as a classroom teacher for three years or less because teachers in the entry phase of their career have a unique experience that is largely a function of their length of time in the profession. A principal was defined as an individual who holds the primary

leadership responsibilities for a school and who has had at least three years experience at the school being studied. Having at least three years of leadership experience at the selected school was seen to be beneficial because a principal at this stage of his or her career would no longer be considered novice and would likely have established consistent leadership practices. Moreover, a principal who has been in a single elementary school for at least three years has had a significant degree of influence over the micropolitical state of the school. This sample of novice teachers, lead mentor, and their principal offered insight into teacher retention as it played out in the school context. A more detailed portrait of this sample is included at the end of Chapter III.

Interview Data

Data from the participant interviews were captured through the use of audiotape recordings and notes, which generated two forms of data (Cresswell, 2007). The audiotape served as a recording of the authentic participant responses, which were then transcribed by a hired transcriptionist. The researcher notes served the purpose of collecting my thoughts about the participant responses and the line of questioning as it unfolded.

Field Notes

Data from observations and informal conversations with participants can take on many forms, such as an observation protocol or as field notes (Cresswell, 2007). Field notes were used to document observations and interactions during the course of the study. I transcribed the field notes that were collected shortly after each visit to the school. The data included in these field notes complemented the interview process and were used during the early stages of data analysis, by providing information to assist in outlining subsequent interviews and planning for additional data collection.

Reflective Notes

Researcher notes documented my ongoing reflection and comments about responses and questions that came up during and after each interview and observation. “Self-reflexivity acknowledges the researcher’s role in the construction of the research problem, the research setting, and research findings, and highlights the importance of researcher becoming consciously aware of these factors and thinking through the implications of these factors for his or her research” (Pillow, 2003, p. 179). By attending to my personal impressions throughout the phases of the study, I was able to gather an additional set of data that informed my understanding of the participants and the case in more meaningful ways. Peshkin (1988) contended that researchers should be systematic about seeking out their own subjectivity and that reflective notes are the way for researchers to be aware and observe themselves throughout the research process. As Pillow (2003) asserted, being reflexive is to understand and gain insight into the working of our social world, but also to provide insight into how this knowledge is produced. This step of documenting my reflections also guaranteed that appropriate actions were taken to ensure the accuracy of participant responses and to convey transparency in the research process.

Physical Data

Yin (2009) referred to three types of physical data, to include documents, archival records, and artifacts. These data types can be accessed in the case study setting and serve as an additional form of information to supplement data that is gathered through other sources. Merriam (2009) asserted that documents are a useful source of information because they are easily accessible and provide ready-made data. In using documents as data, I sought information that may have been missing from the interviews, or that could

enrich the information gleaned through the interviews and observations. Throughout the research process, I requested access to documents that I felt would enhance the case study, and would offer a more comprehensive view of the issue of teacher retention. Some of the documents that I requested included agendas for staff meetings and professional development sessions, and principal-generated memos, as well as copies of teacher evaluations and principal notes about teacher conferences.

Data Collection Procedures

In qualitative research, the major data collection strategies include interviewing, observing, and analyzing documents, all of which directly involve the researcher with the phenomenon under study (Cresswell, 2007; Merriam, 1994). By using a range of materials, researchers can represent a range of perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), which will not only generate more data, but will allow for triangulation of sources.

The rationale for first conducting the focus group, followed by individual interviews was that the focus group allowed for general group perceptions to be revealed by teachers, and additional questions and ideas were able to be explored through the subsequent individual interviews with both teachers and principals. The focus group helped to inform the overall direction of the study, and participant responses were used to structure the ensuing interviews as well as the observations and document collection. For both the focus group and the individual interviews, a research protocol was developed with the purpose of seeking participant responses around the research-based categories related to micropolitics, leadership, and teacher retention. As displayed in Appendix A, the questions in each of the interview protocols include a notation about which category the question most closely aligns. By taking the time to consider the existing research, along

with the objectives of this study, I was able to develop a set of protocols that corresponded in general terms to the data that I was hoping to gather from the participants.

When considering the conclusion of the study, qualitative researchers gauge when they are finished with data collection by coming to data saturation. This is the point in data collection where the information being gathered becomes redundant (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) and the researcher is no longer obtaining unique and original information through the different data collection techniques. As I proceeded through the course of data collection and analysis, I used my personal judgment to determine an appropriate stopping point.

Focus Group Interviews

A focus group is an interview with a group of people who have knowledge about a defined topic. Data is constructed through group interaction, with the intent of getting high-quality information from a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others (Merriam, 2009). Focus groups are good sources of information when the interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information, when interviewees are similar and cooperative with one another, when time to collect information is limited, and when individual interviews may not result in individuals revealing the same type of information (Cresswell, 2007).

Individual Interviews

Qualitative researchers use interviews to find out something that cannot be observed and to gain access to another's perspective (Merriam, 2009). A semi-structured interview gives the researcher flexibility, as a list of questions is used for guidance. This method allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging

worldview of the participant, and to new ideas that are revealed on the topic as the interview is taking place. I generated a list of interview questions based on the literature review of topics related to teacher retention and micropolitical theory, which can be found in Appendix B, which was used as a guide in questioning during the focus group and individual interviews with study participants.

Due to the fact that this was a micropolitical study, it was critical to gather information that offered insight into the relationships and interactions between teachers and principals in the sample school. I conducted a focus group interview of approximately 75 minutes in length at the elementary school in order to gather data from the group of six novice teachers; one teacher was unable to participate in the focus group and she was interviewed individually at another time.

I conducted one 30-45 minute semi-structured individual interviews with all seven novice teachers as a follow-up to the focus groups. Teachers were probed further regarding their contributions to the focus group interview, as I sought additional information from them regarding the perspectives they offered in the group setting. The goal of the individual teacher interviews was to collect additional data that would enhance the focus group data, and also allow for teachers to express their opinions in a confidential, non-group setting.

I engaged the principal in two semi-structured individual interviews, each approximately 60 minutes in length. The principal interviews occurred after the teacher focus group; the sequencing of interviews in this way allowed me to use a line of questioning that was prompted by the data gathered in the teacher focus group. Since the principal interview was used to gather a unique perspective on the topics at hand, as well

as to triangulate the responses provided by teachers, it was important that similar questions and themes were explored. Just as teachers were asked to describe the school culture at Smith, the principal was asked to do the same. The teachers and principal were also both called on to talk about the leadership enacted at the school level and about the distinct interactions teachers and principals had with one another.

The focus groups and interviews took place during non-instructional time, either during teachers' planning periods or after school, and were held in empty classrooms or administrative offices. Details about the study were conveyed to participants in writing via email and again at the initial focus group or individual interview. All participants signed a consent from agreeing to be part of the study and acknowledging that they could withdraw at any time without penalty.

Observational Techniques

The use of observations can complement the data that is generated through interviews. Merriam (2002) described observational data as representative of a "firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest rather than a secondhand account obtained in an interview" (p. 13). Observation is a special skill that involves impression management and the potential marginality of the researcher in a new setting (Cresswell, 2007).

Gronn (1983) and Marshall (1988) advocated a focus on talk to understand the culture of administration. To get a true picture of administrators' talk, one must observe interactions in the natural setting, as "interviews may not suffice" (Marshall, 1991, p. 155). Since conflicts are privatized in school micropolitics, interviews alone may elicit only socially legitimized values. In order to generate knowledge about school leadership and the micropolitical forces at work in schools, I used observation to provide data that could be

triangulated with other sources. For example, I observed faculty meetings, principal-teacher conferences, and teacher group meetings, all for the purpose of gathering data to describe the leadership processes and practices within each school.

I observed each teacher in the sample in at least one individual and one group interaction with the principal. By amassing observational data on teachers and principals, I was able to develop a rich and holistic description of the setting and interactions that occurred within different contexts in the elementary school. These data were useful in strengthening the study's findings and interpretations, and also allowed for triangulation of sources. Observational data was compiled in note form and analyzed similarly to the interview data; categories and themes related to micropolitics were used to organize the data.

Triangulation

The best known way to improve what quantitative researchers term internal validity and reliability is by addressing trustworthiness through triangulation, which is the use of multiple methods, multiple sources of data, multiple investigators or multiple theories to confirm emerging findings (Gall et al., 2007; Mathison, 1988; Merriam, 2009). Through the use of observation and document analysis, as well as the interview of teachers and principals in the sample, I was engaged in triangulation of multiple methods and sources. Documents were particularly useful in providing additional data about the events and practices occurring at Smith. For example, the principal provided a copy of the teacher evaluation form so I could better understand the context of how teachers were evaluated in formal ways. The lead mentor also provided several documents that she created and others from the district level that helped to paint a clear picture of the mentoring program at the

district and at Smith. As another element of triangulation, I primarily drew from micropolitical theory, but engaged other theoretical frameworks related to leadership theory as warranted. Varied types of data sources, analysis, or theories help the researcher to generate findings using different methods and see if they are corroborated across these methods.

There is an assumption that the bias inherent in any particular data source, investigator, or particular method will be cancelled out when used in conjunction with other sources, investigators, or methods. The goal is to converge on a truth about the phenomenon (Mathison, 1988). Triangulation further helps to control bias and establish valid propositions between methods because the flaws of one method may be the strength of another method. Since different participants in a study represent “different constructed realities, a credible outcome is one that adequately represents both the areas in which these realities converge and the points on which they diverge” (Erlandson, 1993, p. 30). While such strategies can help the researcher to maximize the quality of data obtained, they may also produce inconsistencies in the data, where alternative propositions are revealed and ambiguity or contradictions may result. In the current case study, teacher and principal interview data and observations frequently presented opposing perspectives about similar topics.

Because of the irregularities in the data, it was challenging at times to present a clear picture of the overall micropolitical state at Smith Elementary School. My ability to triangulate and recognize both the strengths and weaknesses in the methods, data, and findings allowed me to provide sufficient evidence and explanation of the social phenomenon. Furthermore, the capacity to properly triangulate the data speaks to the

researcher's credibility and his or her ability to provide data that support alternative explanations (Patton, 2002). As alternative explanations for school micropolitics and teacher retention were revealed through this case study, it was necessary for me to report the findings as they aligned with the data and with fidelity.

Member Checking

The qualitative researcher can also use member checking to ensure that the participant's emic perspective was represented accurately and completely (Gall et al., 2007). As Erlandson (1993) asserted, credibility needs to be established with the individuals and groups who have supplied data for the inquiry. Transcriptions were done through the use of word processing and a paper copy of the transcript was provided to each participant to member check, or to confirm the representation of their words. Their comments and feedback were solicited at the end of the data collection period, but no corrections or modifications were made to the data as a result of participant comments. Member checks served to ensure trustworthiness and credibility by taking the preliminary analysis back to the participants and allowing them to determine whether the interpretation seemed accurate and true to their perspective.

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing is another valuable strategy for assisting the researcher in ensuring the quality and trustworthiness of the research. Peer review provides an external check of the research process, acting as a type of "devil's advocate" to keep the researcher on track with the methods, meanings, and interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Peer debriefing was used in this study by engaging my advisor to assist as a peer reviewer. We discussed the study design and she offered methodological feedback prior to and during the study,

and also collaborated to review preliminary findings. Once in the data analysis phase, my advisor also provided input on the development of themes and checked in on the coding of data.

Participant Consent and Confidentiality

At the point when the group of novice teachers met for the focus group, and I provided them with consent forms to sign, they collectively revealed to me that they were not asked by the principal about their desire to participate in the study, but were told that they must participate. This comment was reiterated by the lead mentor, as she explained that the teachers were told in a full-staff meeting that the study would be taking place at Smith Elementary School and the principal read down a list of novice teachers who would be involved. Whether Debbie intended to give teachers a choice in the matter, the perception on the part of the teachers was that their involvement was required and provided some evidence of the complicated nature of teacher-principal hierarchy. I countered those previous actions by letting the teachers know that their involvement from that point forward was voluntary and in line with my ethical responsibilities as a researcher, I reminded them that I would maintain their confidentiality as outlined in the consent form. All seven novice teachers still agreed to be involved in the study, expressing a genuine desire to contribute to the research and they also shared their hopes that the end result would be an improved experience for them and other teachers at Smith.

Beyond the issue of non-voluntary participation, teachers were also concerned that the way they were approached by the principal made it clear to everyone in the school who would be part of the study, and as a result, once the report was published, it would be apparent who had made specific comments. This was a valid concern that several teachers

voiced to me at different stages of the data collection process. I continued to remind them of the option to withdraw at any time and I explained the ways I would attempt to conceal each of their identities in the report, through the use of pseudonyms, by removing identifying information that was not critical to the description of the case, and by giving them the opportunity to read the interview transcripts.

Engagement in Data Collection

Another way that qualitative researchers can ensure trustworthiness involves an adequate engagement in the data collection process. When the researcher is explicit about the research process and the data collection procedures used, he or she will ensure that the explanations are triangulated properly (Mathison, 1988). Extensive time and effort were taken during the planning stages of this study and guidance was sought from my advisor and other qualitative researchers about the best methods for maximizing the study at hand. If the findings of a study are consistent with the data presented, the study will be considered dependable. These precautions were taken during the course of this study, as I have thoroughly explained the steps in the research design, data collection, and analysis within this chapter.

Due to the fact that the data was collected in the spring, the natural conclusion of the study came when the teachers and principal were wrapping up their school year. Although I had been in the setting and fully engaged in data collection over the spring semester, tentative plans were made to continue data collection once the school year resumed in the fall semester, in the event that additional data was needed. However, in the collection of the data, I felt that I had reached a saturation point and that I had collected adequate information to answer the study's research questions and generate meaningful

findings. When considering the conclusion of the study, qualitative researchers gauge when they are finished with data collection by coming to data saturation. This is the point in data collection where the information being gathered becomes redundant (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) and the researcher is no longer obtaining unique and original information through the different data collection techniques.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, there are various ways to analyze the data that has been collected. Merriam (2009) asserted that data analysis is ongoing and emerges through insights and hypotheses that occur throughout the research process. The case study I conducted utilized micropolitical theory to describe various leadership and contextual factors that were present in a school, and related those factors to the retention of novice teachers. To best comprehend the myriad aspects of the elementary school, an interpretive stance was used to study the local, immediate meanings of social actions for participants (Gall et al., 2007). "Interpretive research assumes that there are multiple realities," (Merriam, 1994, p. 48) which presents a dynamic rather than a static view of the world. By carefully balancing the emic and etic perspectives (Gall et al., 2007), I attempted to mediate the viewpoints brought forth by the participants while still revealing my own perceptions of each situation presented. The subjective nature of interpretive research allowed me to present an in-depth look at one particular case and offers readers the option of accepting or rejecting the position on school micropolitics and teacher retention that is presented through the data.

Data analysis was integrated and ongoing throughout the data collection process in order to structure the interviews, observations, and artifact collection, so as to maximize

the quality and quantity of data collected. The data was organized and analyzed systematically according to the sequence described in the following sections and visually represented in Figure 3. By using this approach to data analysis, I was able to start with broad units of data and move to increasingly discrete pieces of data.

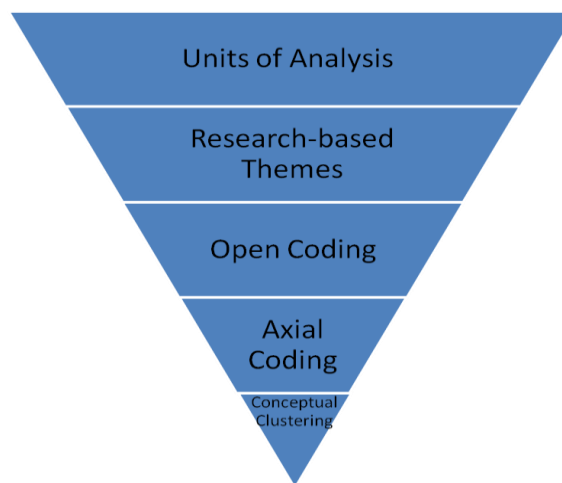


Figure 3: Data organization techniques. The inverted pyramid displays the phases used to organize the data and prepare for analysis.

Units of Analysis

Stake (1995) and Cresswell (2007) advocated for the use of categorical aggregation to analyze case study data; the researcher searches for a collection of instances where issue-relevant meanings can emerge and then attempts to establish patterns of correspondence between the data. Lofland and Lofland (1995) offered three types of unit analysis that could be used, including practices, episodes, and encounters. In the beginning

stage of analysis, categorical aggregation was used to identify practices, episodes, and encounters that were prominent at Smith Elementary School. Specific practices, or ongoing habits and activities adopted by members of the school community, such as authentic communication or top-down decision making, were revealed by the participants in the case study. Episodes were defined as a series of events that happened in sequence, such as meetings or mentoring. Examples of encounters included specific principal-teacher interactions and teacher-teacher interactions that happened occasionally but not consistently enough to be considered a regular practice. This type of "unitizing" was addressed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as "units of information that will, sooner or later, serve as the basis for defining categories" (p. 344). At first these units were used as a preliminary organizational structure around the data and later some of those units became categories during the open coding phase of analysis.

Research-based Themes

After identifying some essential units for analysis, I began to apply concepts related to the research on teacher retention and micropolitics to the data. A constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used to look for common patterns and processes that recurred across different situations (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002). Glaser and Strauss' constant comparative method is an inductive form of data analysis in which the generation of theory is a continually developing process. Tentative themes were generated from the original data, with guidance from the research-based theory. The original set of 44 research-based categories are included in Appendix B. By thinking about those theory-driven, research-based categories, I had the ability to examine the data according to my worldview along with the support of existing research. Based on my knowledge of existing

literature related to micropolitical theory, school leadership, and teacher retention, I was able to construct a broader set of themes that aligned with current research in the field.

Through the course of data collection and analysis, I thought about the entire set of data with those categories in mind, which helped me to impose structure on the data and further informed my thinking about that data. Ten research-based themes were eventually designated as the overall organizational framework for the data. Those ten themes are Academic Instruction, Collegiality, Interpersonal Relations, School Hierarchy, Conflict, Procedural Events, Control, Neutralizing Events, Organizational Culture, and Teacher Traits. The graphic display of those themes is included in Chapter IV.

Coding: Developing Theme-based Categories

In order to further organize the data effectively, qualitative researchers must also make decisions about the processes to be used for coding. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) described coding as a way of "relating our data to our ideas about these data" (p. 27). This approach to encoding qualitative information involves the process of thematic analysis, in which an explicit code may include a list of themes, a complex model with themes, or indicators that are causally related (Boyatzis, 1998). In this study, the explicit code started with my own researcher-generated categories or sub-themes that stemmed from the expert-generated themes.

Just as findings from leading experts in micropolitical theory were used to develop themes in the early stages of analysis, a similar method was used to assign categories for the data. By identifying the key themes and patterns in the data, as they related to teacher retention and micropolitics, I used open coding as a starting point for the organization of the raw data. To get the most out of the data, I built associations with the study's purpose

and ensured that the themes were exhaustive, mutually exclusive, and conceptually congruent (Merriam, 2009, p. 168).

As previously mentioned, I originally developed 44 unique categories that were related to research-based descriptors of micropolitics, leadership, and teacher retention. All data was separated and designated to one of those 44 categories in which it fit best. The coding process involved two main steps: 1) I printed the transcripts and segmented the data into finite pieces of information that could be placed into one of the designated categories; and 2) I physically sorted the pieces of data and assigned each one to an envelope labeled with the category where it was best aligned. The analysis was ongoing and interactive as I manipulated data in physical ways to create order and sense-making within the existing categories. Moreover, I collapsed, expanded, combined, and created new categories as needed to further interact with the data. In many cases, categories overlapped and similar ones such as collaboration, cooperation, and power-with were grouped together. In other cases, pieces of data did not easily fit into one of the established categories and I had to decide whether I needed to create a new category, fit the data into an existing category, or disregard the data because it was not well-aligned with the theory.

The process of axial coding followed open coding, in which I established connections between the selected categories, promoting a further analysis into the data (Schwandt, 2007). As Strauss and Corbin (1990) stated, axial coding is the clustering or reconfiguring of categories identified or developed by others. As an example in my study, I used axial coding to link specific micropolitical sub-themes, such as trust, openness, and physical presence of the principal together under the category of interpersonal relations. Using the example from above, the similar categories of collaboration, cooperation, and

power-with were first grouped together during the open coding phase and during the phase of axial coding were then combined under the theme of collegiality. By grouping several of the initial categories together in ways that made sense according to micropolitical theory, I was able to better fit the data into the overarching themes of the study, such as Collegiality, Interpersonal Relations, and Control, to name a few. This element of coding was useful because I was able to develop a clearer picture of the data as it was interpreted according to the theoretical framework. The analysis continued to get deeper as I was able to make inferences, develop models, and generate new theory. This is the aspect of data analysis in which I really incorporated the theoretical perspectives of micropolitics and made meaning of the data with those perspectives in mind.

Conceptual Clustering: A Visual Representation of the Data

Once open and axial codes were applied to the data, conceptual clustering was used to organize the array of themes that were identified (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). After initial data connections were made in the axial coding phase, I clustered and collapsed themes and categories so that each category matched well with the other categories under the designated theme. For example, in the original groupings, the category of instructional control fell under academic instruction, but in reviewing the other categories and themes, I realized that it would be a better fit for instructional control to fall under the theme of control.

Wolcott (2009) described the function that display can have in analysis; charts and diagrams can be developed in draft form during preliminary efforts to organize data and can help researchers tease out relationships and patterns spatially. To bring order to my own thinking about the extensive amount of data grouped into several categories and

themes, I created several iterations of a concept map to display the interrelatedness of the data in visual form. The concept map, in its final form is presented in Figure 4 in Chapter IV, and offers a graphical representation of the prevailing themes that were revealed through the study. Within each of those themes, several categories were used to house data, which are further described in Chapter IV.

Interpretation and Generation of Findings

After analyses were made, I embarked on the process of representing the study's findings. As Josselson (1995) contended, “Data, after all, do not speak for themselves...They are merely the occasion for us to try to weave a narrative in which obtaining a certain set of ‘significant’ results makes sense-sense in the context of ongoing narratives both of epistemology and of developing a communal tale of human experience” (p.29). Therefore, narrative included in Chapters IV and V was an integral component of this case study and the data were merely a starting point for discussion and interpretation of results. In this study, there was a logical flow from identification of data sources, to data collection, to data analysis, to the representation of the findings in a narrative format. The narrative that follows in Chapter IV succinctly describes the reality of the case, and integrates the theoretical framework of micropolitical theory with the richness of the data, in order to offer readers the opportunity to make meaning about the problem of teacher retention.

Application of Micropolitical Theory

My ability to present an interpretive analysis according to micropolitical theory is the most productive way of aligning the context of teacher retention with the espoused theory. By carefully assessing the relationship between the study's data and the

micropolitics of schools, I was able to determine ways that the data supported the existing theory, ways that it advanced the theory in any way, and ways that it refuted the theory.

"Theory serves to add subtlety and complexity to what at first glance appears to be a simple phenomena and allows the researcher to build a repertoire of understandings, diverse perspectives, of the same phenomenon," (Anfara & Mertz, 2006, p. 190).

Interpretation is included in Chapter V, at the conclusion of the study, situating the findings in a broader educational context, and includes a discussion of next steps for both the theory as a framework, and for myself as a researcher and theorist.

In large part, the principles of micropolitical theory have driven the interpretation of data in this study. Theoretical frameworks advance knowledge in a field of study by allowing researchers to "situate their research and knowledge contributions in a scholarly conversation," (Anfara & Mertz, 2006, p. 194). The established language of a theory can assist in making explicit meaning of the phenomena being studied because it provides labels and categories to not only analyze, as described in the previous section, but to propose plausible interpretations of that data (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). In many instances, researchers should be open to the possibility that multiple interpretations, or interpretations based on multiple theoretical frameworks, may fit their data. This is something that I remained aware of throughout the process of data analysis and interpretation, and an issue that became prevalent in this study.

Researchers also need to make the crucial distinction between understanding how some data may fit within a theoretical frame and making decisions about the exclusion of some data that does not fit in the theoretical frame (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). Theoretical frameworks can either be "too reductionistic, stripping the phenomenon of its complexity

and interest or can be too deterministic, forcing the researcher to fit the data into predetermined categories," (Anfara & Mertz, 2006, p. 195). An over-reliance on the theoretical framework can either distort the phenomena being studied, or can blind researchers to relevant aspects of the theory (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). As such, it was essential that I recognize my interpretive capabilities, as readers need to be assured of the credibility and trustworthiness of the data and reporting.

As a researcher, I am secure in my own theoretical position, but still aware of the limits of both myself as researcher and of the theory being used. This is where my knowledge and understanding of the strengths and limitations of micropolitical theory were essential in making meaningful interpretations of the data. By sticking close to the theory in the analysis, the generation and interpretation of findings centered, first and foremost, around micropolitical themes, and secondly around my personal interpretation of those themes. As an example, interpersonal relations were found to be a prominent element of a micropolitical environment so in order to seek instances in the data where teacher-principal encounters could fit into that theme, the category of authentic communication was generated based on my own personal understanding of both the themes and the data. In another instance, I imposed my own belief about the importance of professional development as an essential component of academic instruction and the important connection to a principal's instructional leadership. Throughout the interpretation phase, I constantly mediated my own explanations of the data with the theory-based understandings that had been developed.

Anfara and Mertz (2006) discussed the researcher's ability to reveal and conceal, and especially about the importance of remaining open about what may be concealed and

explicitly identifying those limitations within the study design. In both situations, my attention, as a researcher, to these hazards of interpretation and meaning-making were essential in producing trustworthy findings.

Role of Researcher

As the researcher in this study, I served as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis and it was important to produce an end result that was richly descriptive and distinguishable from abstract, formal knowledge (Merriam, 2002; Merriam, 2009). Case study researchers project their etic perspective (Gall et al., 2007), or their viewpoint as an outsider, that helps them to make conceptual and theoretical sense of the case. In combination with the emic perspective (Gall et al., 2007), which evaluates the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants, the balance in these approaches lent itself to a qualitative study that sought to offer a comprehensive picture of teacher retention. In order to help readers understand the complexity of the case, I used the participant perspectives as a bridge to focus on some central issues or themes that have been highlighted in past research on teacher retention and micropolitics.

As asserted by Cresswell (2007), a thoughtful researcher will use an interview guide to plan and direct the questioning, but the true value in an interview depends on the researcher knowing enough about the topic to ask meaningful questions in language understood by the participant. As a former teacher, and an educator for over ten years, I have spent countless hours investigating the topics of this study and I also share a common language with the teachers and principals who were interviewed.

To effectively engage in observation, the researcher must gain access to the site, decide on their role (participant-observer, complete participant, or complete observer), and

use some type of method for recording notes. As a seasoned educator, I am comfortable in school settings, and understand the context in which teachers and principals operate. These qualities allowed me to take on the observer role in various contexts within the elementary school, while presenting minimal disruptions to the natural setting. Furthermore, my professional experience in observing teachers for varied purposes prepared me for looking at and listening to the many events and interactions that took place during the data collection.

As previously mentioned, the qualitative researcher should engage in reflexivity, the process of reflecting on him or herself as researcher. Listening and writing with reflexivity are tools used to position oneself as the researcher and to understand how your personal history can influence the research process and produce more valid research (Altheide & Johnson, 1998; Ball, 1990). I used reflexive journaling to critically assess the research process and the interpretations being generated (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Reflective notes were a useful tool for me to represent my ideas, impressions, and concerns during the data collection phase of the study (Cresswell, 2007). Altheide and Johnson (1998) also posited that the use of reflexivity in research has led to increased subjectivity, which means that when researchers like me focus on who I am, who I have been, and how I feel, there is a resulting influence on data collection and analysis. Through this process, I was able to think about and explain potential biases, dispositions, and assumptions about the research, helping readers to understand the authenticity of the description and interpretation that I brought forth.

I also met with my dissertation advisor to conference at various stages in the data collection process in order to reflect more deeply about issues that arose during the study.

Reflexivity then became “a continuing mode of self-analysis and political awareness” (Callaway, 1992, p. 33). Those conversations also helped me to consider the implications of the data and my personal interpretations of that data, especially in light of the complex nature of school micropolitics and some of the observations and conversations that had taken place with participants. “Reflexivity is often understood as involving an ongoing self-awareness during the research process which aids in making visible the practice and construction of knowledge within research in order to produce more accurate analyses of our research (Pillow, 2003, p. 178). Although I began the study thinking that I was pretty open and self-aware, some of the challenges I encountered with participants’ fears and concerns led me to seek guidance about the best approach for dealing with specific information that was shared with me.

Embedded within the research process are relationships of power that all researchers must face (Pillow, 2003). The hierarchical relationship between researcher and participant can have an influence on qualitative research, often in ways that are unintended. As Young (1997) noted:

When people obey the injunction to put themselves in the position of others, they too often put *themselves*, with their own particular experiences and privileges, in the positions they see the others. When privileged people put themselves in the position of those who are less privileged, the assumptions derived from their privilege often allow them unknowingly to misrepresent the other’s situation (p. 48).

In this way, as I attempted to connect with the teacher participants and make the research more valid, the act of sharing my personal background may have actually introduced a

power differential to the researcher-subject relationship. As the researcher, and as a former teacher with experience behind me, it is possible that I came across to participants as someone who possessed privilege and influence over them.

Despite the possibility that an imbalance of power existed between myself and the teacher participants, I still attempted to counteract the power differential by making an effort to be transparent about the study's purpose and methods early on, so as to diminish any misguided feelings about my position. Butler (1993) and Pillow (2003) discussed the limits of recognition and representation as ways that the researcher must demonstrate humility and generosity toward the research participant as a way of managing the relationship between researcher and participant. By engaging in reflexivity, I was better poised to recognize the inadvertent power I held and to properly address how this authority impacted the research findings.

Pillow (2003) presented an approach to developing reciprocity with the research subjects by hearing, listening, and equalizing the research relationship, doing research "with" instead of "on". In this way, the researcher's authority is diminished and there is an attempt to let the data and the subjects speak for themselves. I began the case study recognizing that an important element in the study would be to simply listen to participants, especially the novice teachers, to gain an understanding of their perspective about their experiences at Smith Elementary School. Pillow (2003) and Patai (1991) each discussed how researchers may use reflexivity to become closer to the subject and to "affirm oneness" (Patai, 1991, p. 144), using their own experiences to find similarities with the research participants. Several factors influenced the way I approached the study with the teacher participants. For one thing, because I was in their shoes a relatively short time

ago, I built a rapport with the group and each individual rather quickly and easily. I also shared with them how my early experiences as a teacher led me to this point in my career where I was very interested in understanding and supporting the growth of novice teachers; by giving them some insight into the reasons for the study and about my personal convictions about education, I further developed trust and comfort about my goals and rationale for doing the study.

In some way, the development of rapport and trust-building that took place in the initial focus group aided me in presenting to participants the short-term and long-term motivation for the study and for my work in education research. Through the use of transparency, I demonstrated to the teachers and the principal that researchers like myself could provide an opportunity to help them understand and change their situations (Lather, 1986). This notion of reciprocity as a reflexive tool had the potential to empower the participants, as I engaged in indirect efforts to reorient and focusing on their reality in ways that would allow them to transform that reality (Lather, 1986). Early in the study, teachers were very receptive to the notion of gaining a broader and deeper understanding of the micropolitics at Smith Elementary School. They appeared to be invested in the profession and were interested in their role and the ways that they could influence positive change at the school. On the other hand, the principal appeared to be less interested in the implications of the study and the ways in which the findings could inform her leadership practices. Many of the teachers requested that I share the findings with them at the conclusion of the study and I assured them that I would provide a summary of the findings and a discussion of recommended actions.

Peshkin (1993) advocated for being in tune with one's own subjectivity during data collection so the researcher can connect his or her feelings to the eventual outcomes and findings of the research. As the researcher, I was the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, so my interpretations were accessed directly through the observations and interviews. The burden in this qualitative study was to provide the reader with a description in enough detail to show that my descriptions and conclusions made sense (Merriam, 2009). Chapter IV provides extensive interview and observational data to demonstrate the tight linkages that were revealed between the data and the theoretical framework, and even to present disconfirming data when it became evident.

Trustworthiness

To describe qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) use terms like credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as widely accepted substitutes for the empirical notions of validity and reliability. The trustworthiness that is established by the researcher evolves from a variety of strategies undertaken throughout the research process. Part of ensuring trustworthiness is that the researcher must be honorable in carrying out the study in the most ethical manner possible.

The researcher must provide sufficient detail, through thick description, to provide context for the reader to make a connection with their situation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined transferability as the idea that the "burden of proof lies less with the original investigator than with the person seeking to make an application elsewhere," (p. 203). Furthermore, by using a truthful and authentic reporting style, the researcher is able to write with verisimilitude, a style of writing that draws readers closely into the events and feelings of the participant's world (Gall et al., 2007). As a novice qualitative researcher,

this element of the research was a challenge for me, but I made every attempt to offer ample details to demonstrate that credible and dependable data collection methods were used. Moreover, the extensive data used to create a rich description of the context, events, and interactions at Smith Elementary School exemplified my attention to providing readers with a clear and detailed picture of the micropolitical state of the school.

In qualitative research, applicability is more appropriate than generalizability in establishing the trustworthiness of the research. Erickson (1986) argued that since the general lies in the particular, what we learn in a particular case can be transferred to similar situations. The use of specific purposeful sampling, as was used in the selection of the case in this study, can increase the applicability to other similar contexts. Credibility is less related to the size of the population sample than on the quality of the data and on the analytical representation of the researcher (Patton, 1990). By conducting the study with fidelity, I ensured that the data was trustworthy, and that my analysis was closely connected to that data. For the reader to generalize to their situation, it is incumbent upon them to "determine what can apply to his or her context," (Merriam, 2009, p. 48); the research will only become useful to readers if they can apply it to their experience or setting. As the researcher, I was able to assist the readers in their application by providing a thick description that lends itself to comparison with other contexts.

Summary

Through the use of a qualitative approach, I have explored principal leadership and the resulting effect on novice teachers, with the intention of describing the micropolitical factors that led to teacher retention in an elementary school. This chapter offered a description of the case study that was conducted to investigate the perceptions of novice

teachers and principals at an elementary school with an average-high retention rate. The methodology and processes described have led to a rich and contextual view of the activities and interactions that are taking place in this school. The use of interview, observation, and document collection has provided a plethora of data to depict the micropolitics that are occurring.

Through the application of the theoretical frameworks to the data, I was able to interpret the information that was gleaned and represent the findings in a narrative format. Throughout the course of the study, the elements of trustworthiness were at the forefront of my work. By attending to my own biases, engaging in reflection, and following qualitative processes with fidelity, I ensured that the credibility of the research was intact. The major themes of the research study findings will be presented in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

Teacher attrition is a costly consequence of the way that public schools are currently being led. In the case study at Smith Elementary School, ample evidence was gathered to support the notion that the negative micropolitical factors at play in the school and among staff members outweigh the positive micropolitical factors. There are several different types of micropolitical events that were clearly described by teachers and the principal, and the often conflicting perspectives demonstrate that the culture at Smith is tainted by unproductive practices.

In the following sections of this chapter, different elements of micropolitical theory will be used to describe and make sense of the actions, interactions, and events at Smith Elementary School. As presented in the methods discussion in Chapter III, the topics that structure the findings in this chapter were initially derived from the literature on micropolitical theory. Upon reviewing the data from the current case study, I engaged in a constant comparative analysis of the data in order to organize data by category and theme. All of the main themes originated from previous research in micropolitical theory, while some sub-themes were generated by the data collected for this study and the need for further categorization. The theoretical framework influenced the study design in the way that the research-based themes were a guiding force in the selection of the setting, the sample of participants, and in the data sources that were used. As described in Chapter III, the interview protocol was designed to consider the general information that was needed from participants in order to build rapport, understand their overall experience at Smith,

and then to answer the research questions about school leadership and micropolitics of schools. The data gathered from the teachers and principal in their interviews were related to the initial themes that were developed and as a result, the interview data was helpful in structuring a rich description of the overall case at Smith Elementary School. Furthermore, the use of axial coding during the data analysis stage allowed me to make connections between the discrete themes and led to the creation of a graphic representation of the micropolitics of Smith Elementary School. This graphic is displayed in Figure 4 and fully described below.

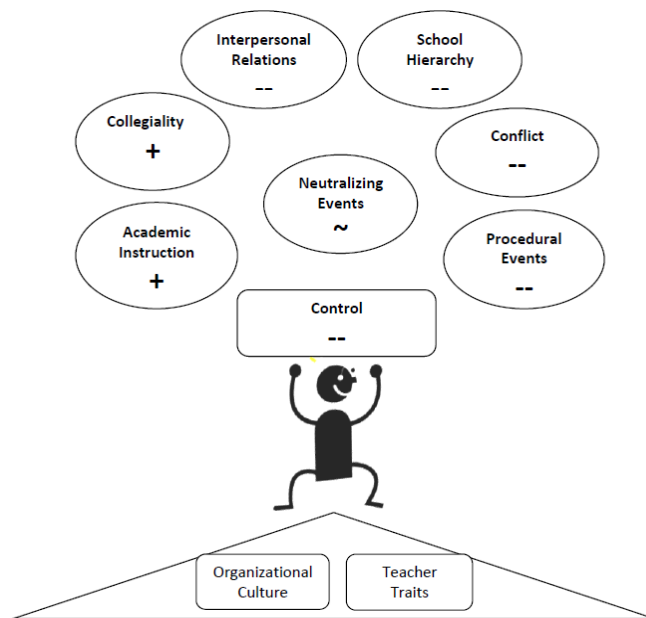


Figure 4: The micropolitics of Smith Elementary School. This figure displays the juggling act the principal at Smith Elementary School must do to control the micropolitical environment.

The first section of this chapter introduces the reader to the study participants. The next section, titled Organizational Culture starts the presentation of findings by presenting the context of Smith, including the demographics and the overall culture that teachers and principal perceive at the school, giving readers an idea of how the micropolitics are evidenced at the school. The chapter concludes with a section titled Teacher Traits, which describes the internal influences and motivations that novice teachers at Smith possess and connects their professional self-identities with the issue of teacher retention. These two sections were strategically placed as bookends to begin with the foundational element of culture and to wrap up with the foundational element of teacher traits, with the intent of setting the background for the overall experience that teachers and principal have at Smith.

The sections in between these two bookends present a thorough depiction of the realities of life at Smith, in the following sequence: Academic Instruction, Collegiality, Interpersonal Relations, School Hierarchy, Conflict, Procedural Events, Control, Neutralizing Events, Organizational Culture, and Teacher Traits. The sequence of micropolitical themes was deliberate as the overall purpose of schools is first described through an attention to instruction, followed by a discussion of collegiality, which is a research-based approach for fostering positive micropolitics in schools. The subsequent four sections describe the relationships, hierarchy, procedures and conflicts that were evidenced at the school; these four sections largely present data that aligns with the more negative notions associated with micropolitical theory. Finally, the section on neutralizing events serves to describe the ways that micropolitics are used, primarily by teachers, to temper their experiences at Smith.

The graphic presented in Figure 4 visually displays the overall categories of Smith Elementary School's micropolitics as balls in the air. The themes represented on the balls are academic instruction, collegiality, interpersonal relations, school hierarchy, control, and procedural events. These overall themes depict the particular actions or interactions that lead to either a positive or negative school experience for novice teachers. Through the case study, micropolitical subtleties were revealed that provide evidence of the existence of each of these themes. While there were some positive undercurrents within the micropolitical themes, for the most part, the themes and sub-themes exposed negative events and experiences at the school. The intricacies of these micropolitical themes, as they played out at Smith, are detailed in this chapter.

The principal is at the center of this juggling act, holding the control in her hands. This graphic representation indicates that the principal exerts power over all other aspects of the school. A variety of scenarios can result from a juggling act; one ball can fall, several balls can fall, or all balls can fall, in any case leaving the principal with less control.

These balls in the air are mediated by some neutralizing events, such as exchange theories, contrived collegiality, and strategic compliance. These factors have the effect of leveling the experience at Smith because they are events and interactions that bring together both positive and negative factors in such a way that the effect for teachers is an overall neutral experience. Further, the micropolitics of Smith are largely grounded in the organizational culture and predetermined teacher traits, which is why the principal is standing on the base that holds these categories. These foundational factors are important because they are the inherent characteristics of the school and of the teacher that have both

been developed over time. The dominant school culture, organizational vision and goals, and collective norms are elements of the school that are relatively stable and serve as the base for establishing common practices at Smith. Some of these variables have remained rather unchanged over time and others are in a constant state of flux, thus increasing the complexity of the micropolitical state at Smith. As a result of this depiction, the organizational factors and teacher characteristics help to describe the school's stability and its ability serve as a strong foundation for successful educational practices.

Overall the graphic illustrates that the micropolitics in play at Smith are complex and multifaceted. It is inevitable that this complicated arrangement of school variables has an effect on novice teachers and others at Smith Elementary School, as they attempt to make sense of, and navigate, the events and interactions before them. In their attempts to create a productive work space for themselves and to engage in practices that will positively promote student achievement, teachers strive to minimize the negative factors and maximize the positive factors, and to understand the principal's decisions, to create an overall experience that allows them to feel satisfied and successful in their chosen profession.

Introduction to Study Participants

In order to understand the sample of participants that were involved in the study, a brief description of each participant follows.

Alex was a kindergarten teacher in the second year of teaching. Alex described how moving around the world shaped the decision to go into the teaching field.

I was in the military a few years. I got out and had my babies and did not work for like eight years. And then I lived in New York. My husband is in the military, or

was, so we moved around a lot. When we were in New York I worked with teenagers at a rec center. I really liked working with kids. They were older, but I enjoyed it. So when we moved to Germany I tried to get back into a rec center, but all they had was day care, so I worked at day care in a preschool setting for ten years. Then they called me teacher so I decided to get my masters [degree] and become a teacher.

Casey was a second grade teacher in the second year of teaching. Casey described how early experiences can shape an individual's career path.

Growing up I had various medical problems. I started school at a very young age going to a special needs school in the hopes that I'd be able to eventually attend mainstream school. So because of the different teachers and other people impacting my life from a young age, as I got older I decided that I wanted to have that kind of impact on other children as well. That's why I decided to go into the teaching field.

Dana was a third grade teacher in the first year of teaching. Dana also described how early experiences can influence later career decisions.

I always wanted to be a teacher. At a younger age, I kind of struggled in school. I went to Sylvan Learning Center and after Sylvan Learning Center I came out making straight As, so I think that really, I saw the process and that they used all the manipulatives. I just thought it was very interesting so that even more pushed me on to be a teacher, so here I am as a third grade teacher now.

Isabelle was a fourth grade teacher in the second year of teaching. Isabelle went through a traditional program and had a personal motivation for becoming a teacher.

Not to sound cheesy or corny or any of that, but I always wanted to be a teacher...but I did always want to be a teacher and I married my husband young and he joined the military. I got my degree with my small children while he was in Iraq, so I used that time while he was gone to really focus on school work. We moved back to Virginia and I'm in my second year.

Karen was a first grade teacher in the first year of teaching. Karen went through a traditional teacher preparation program.

I've also always wanted to be a teacher. I actually had a hard time deciding. I was a pre-med major and I decided against that when I started my clinical hours and went into teaching. I just graduated with my undergrad and I'm working on my masters now, so it was one of my first-choice careers.

Mary was a fourth grade teacher in the second year of teaching. Mary was a career switcher and was trained via an alternative route.

I went back to school in 1995. I worked in the business field for quite a while doing accounting and we were moving at the time cross country back to Pennsylvania and I thought it was a good time for me to go back to school. I knew that I did not want to stay in the accounting field and I was in a toss-up as to what to go back to school for, either something in the medical field or teaching. I also knew that I was going to be starting a family, so I thought about the medical field being the hours that it was, probably not being very family-friendly, so I decided to go back for teaching. I went back and got my masters in teaching and then I actually did not work for quite a while because I had children and so that's why I just started out three years ago back to work.

Rebecca was an English as a Second Language (ESOL) teacher in the first year of teaching. Rebecca was a career switcher and entered teaching after being involved in other experiences with children.

I was a program coordinator at a local catholic church and I was working a lot with children there and I really enjoyed being in that environment and working with kids. I was doing it more from a management point of view, but I liked more of a one-on-one so I decided that I wanted to get my foot into education in a public school system a little bit more. I started out as a substitute and when I was subbing I became interested in ESOL. I was able to get a job as an ESOL teacher assistant, then decided that I was going to get my certification, because I was doing a lot of the same work that the teachers were doing. I just recently got my certification and got this job.

Tara was a third grade teacher and lead mentor in the fifteenth year of teaching. Tara had an important role in the school. As lead mentor, she used her institutional knowledge and leadership skills to develop and implement the induction and mentoring programs in which novice teachers participated upon entrance to Smith.

Debbie was the school principal in her seventh year as principal at Smith Elementary School. Principal Debbie described her career trajectory starting as a school counselor.

I had been a school counselor for fourteen years and I enjoyed the job, but there are a lot of things that counselors do that kind of can bleed over into administrative type duties, and I ended up taking some admin classes just to get additional hours toward my masters plus thirty and in taking the classes with the cohort found that I

just really thought that was a good change to make, because as a counselor you're trying to advocate for children and making schools places where they can be successful, but you have a limited amount of influence on that and so as an administrator you have a little bit more influence and so I saw that as just the natural, logical progression to being able to take the things I had learned as a classroom teacher and as a counselor and trying to be able to use those skills in a different venue to impact not just individual small group of children, but impact the whole school culture and climate.

Debbie took pride in her work as school principal and cared about the students she served. She made it clear that her professional vision was to see all children become successful learners. She looked to the staff at Smith Elementary School to collaborate and build relationships that would help all children learn. Additional information is provided in the remaining sections of this chapter that will more clearly define and portray the perceptions and experiences of these individuals.

Organizational Culture

As noted in the review of literature on micropolitics in Chapter II, public schools are complex, with each class, school, and community offering a distinct combination of social conditions that can dramatically influence school outcomes, including teaching and learning (Blase & Blase, 2002). Rosenholtz (1989) contended that "the organizational conditions of schools create some of the major problems associated with teacher quality and commitment" (p. 427). The case study at Smith Elementary School was no exception.

As portrayed in the graphic in Figure 4, organizational culture serves as the basis for the micropolitical environment at Smith Elementary School. As such, the community

demographics, the makeup of the teaching workforce, and the overall vision of the school have a large impact on the way interactions take place between stakeholders and in the way that the principal enacts leadership to meet the needs of the school community. In essence, the human capital and the educational ideals are depicted throughout this initial section of the chapter in order to situate the findings in a richly descriptive school portrait.

School Demographics and Parent Involvement

Researchers widely confirm the principal's central role in establishing, reinforcing, and realigning the school culture (Bryk, Sebring, Kerbow, Rollow, & Easton, 1998; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Fullan, 1991). While Debbie, the principal, does not have control over the neighborhood demographic, she does have an influence over the ways the staff at Smith prepare and respond to the needs of the students and families. The demographics of the school community at Smith have a large effect on the culture and the micropolitics that exist. The principal described the student population in the mid-range for poverty and ESL and as being about one-third transient, and talked about the fact that they have eleven trailers and construction is soon starting to expand the building. These facts demonstrated that veteran teachers at Smith have been confronted with a shifting population over the past several years, which forced them to adapt to an unfamiliar educational setting, while many novice teachers entered into a school culture that was more familiar to them, and reminiscent of their own schooling experiences and those they were exposed to in the preparation programs. Students of color are the majority in 70 of the 130 largest school districts in the US with student populations of 36,000 or more; furthermore, 86% of elementary and secondary teachers are European Americans but only 64% of K-12 students are, with the other 36% distributed among groups of color (Darling-Hammond &

Berry, 1999). These statistics point to the fact that a quickly changing student population is not unique to Smith Elementary School, but a reality that educators in many districts around the country are facing.

Teachers talked about the student demographic and parent involvement at Smith, sharing their experiences and opinions about how this affected teaching and learning at the school. In several past research studies, teachers expressed dissatisfaction due to the difficulties in addressing student needs and getting to the true work of teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond & Wise, 1985; Goodlad, 1984; Rosenholtz, 1989; Veenman, 1984). Casey, Isabelle, and Rebecca all contended that lack of parental support makes the job of a novice teacher highly challenging. Tara agreed with the novice teachers, and noted that the work with this population of students and families is rewarding, but challenging. Tara's assertion about lack of parental involvement also contributed to the idea that a non-collaborative culture exists at Smith. The challenges presented by a changing demographic of learners and families compel teachers and administrators to adapt their educational perspectives and methods for meeting student needs. Among school characteristics, school poverty level was one of the highest predictors of whether a teacher would stay or leave teaching, particularly after their first year (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, p. 702).

Some teachers discussed how unprepared they were for the realities of Smith. Many of the issues brought up by novice teachers are connected to the literature on teacher retention. Just as Ingersoll (2003a) described, factors like large class sizes, intrusions on classroom time, and lack of planning time are not major reasons for teacher turnover, but do have a negative impact on novice teachers. Student misbehavior created a burden for teachers at Smith, impacting their abilities to teach to their full potential (Blase, 1986;

Rosenholtz, 1989). Since challenges associated with student behavior and motivation appear to be most prevalent in urban or rural schools in which low-income and minority students are being taught (Martinez-Garcia & Slate, 2009), Smith teachers are at a heightened risk of being affected by these issues. All of these factors contribute to the culture and micropolitics at Smith Elementary School and define the ways in which teachers, administrators, parents, and students relate to one another.

In terms of preparedness for the classroom, several researchers (NCCTQ, 2007; Good & Brophy, 2008; Darling-Hammond et al., 2005) found that teacher training put too much emphasis on theory versus more practical classroom issues and that there is often conflict between the theoretical knowledge novice teachers bring to the school and the practices endorsed within the school. Rebecca talked about the level of preparation she received and the difficulty she had in making the transition to practice.

When it actually comes time to put it into practice, you don't really anticipate all the issues that the students bring to the table, especially when they come from lower socio-economic backgrounds, they have a lot of struggles and challenges that other students may not have, especially coming to school hungry or coming to school, just not having proper rest. You know, they're not getting their basic needs met and so that's a big thing that I was not prepared for when I was going to school that to really see it firsthand that these students really need to have their basic needs met before they can succeed academically.

Like other novice teachers at Smith, Rebecca idealized the teaching experience and once faced with the daily grind, came to a different realization. Mary shared her perspective on

the work ethic of teachers at Smith and noted the ways that Smith is different from other schools.

I can pretty much say with confidence that every teacher at this school is working a heck of a lot harder than the teachers that are at a school where the grades are just coming easy, because they've got parents like us at home.

Mary's comment is loaded with meaning, as she makes the assumption that teachers, or at least the teachers at Smith, all fall into the category of being interested and involved in their child's education. Within this statement, she also implies that the parents at Smith do not hold the same values that teachers hold. The attitudes and perspectives held by teachers are grounded in their personal histories and are also formed through their interactions with the prevailing institutional views held by other educators at Smith. The longstanding belief systems that are prevalent at Smith chiefly impact the micropolitics of the school.

Staff Composition and Hiring Practices

The roles and responsibilities among staff at Smith Elementary School have affected beginning teachers and given them an understanding of the micropolitical culture. The staff at Smith was comprised of a mix of middle-age and older teachers. Of the few young teachers on staff, two of them are beginning teachers that were part of the study. As observed during several staff meetings, grade-level meetings and during the regular school day, teachers and administrators at Smith dressed casually and interacted with one another rather informally. Those involved in the study seemed very dedicated to the profession and to the role they play in children's lives. They recognized that they chose a tough job, but they showed a commitment to making a difference.

Many of the novice teachers agreed that their teacher colleagues and office staff at Smith are helpful and assist in getting their job done on a daily basis. Dana explained:

As far as the leadership with the secretaries in the office, they are awesome. Get on their good side because they are awesome, they are always right there, they help you with everything. I think if I ever had a question as far as leadership goes, I ask the assistant principal, because she doesn't seem as busy, her door is always open. It might be because of how their position works, but the principal clearly probably has more things to do.

It is evident that although Dana does not have a clear sense of the role definition that should exist at Smith, she is aware that informal leadership is embedded in different roles within the school and that the principal is less available to meet her needs. Being astute to the level of control held by different individuals in the building is an asset to novice teachers as they begin to understand how they can get things done and who can be of assistance.

The school's average retention rate of 91 percent over the last three years (D. Franklin, personal communication, May, 18, 2011) places the school in the average-high range as compared to national data which cited retention rates between 80 and 84 percent (NCTAF, 2007). Debbie explained that many of the leavers were for personal reasons such as a spouse being transferred or moving to another school closer to home. The retention rates give some insight to the teachers' commitment to Smith and to the education profession. Despite the discontentment that teachers have expressed with many aspects of the school's micropolitical state, they are still willing to remain at the school. Debbie further described her perspective that turnover has an effect on the "social fabric of the

school"; since different people bring different individual gifts to the school, the social fabric can change drastically when teachers are lost to attrition. Research displays that disparate levels of attrition are more likely in urban schools and schools with greater populations of students in poverty since those schools are more likely to be staffed with the least effective and most underprepared teachers (NCTAF, 2002).

Through her descriptions of the effects of the hiring and placement strategies she enacted at Smith, Debbie clearly placed an emphasis on ensuring that well-prepared teachers staff Smith Elementary School. Darling-Hammond (2000) asserted that the impact of teacher quality on student achievement can be stronger than the influences of student background factors, such as poverty, language, and minority status. Blase and Blase (1999) described a principal who minimized the level of resistance in a school by hiring teachers whose values were consistent with her professional values and those of the community. It appeared that through strategic selection and hiring processes, Debbie was able to bring teachers on board at Smith who have the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful with the diverse population. While her intentions were admirable, there are bureaucratic policies and procedures at play within the school and the district that cause the hiring process to be more arduous than it need be. The idiosyncratic nature of teacher education, licensing, and hiring policies has led to variable standards and cumbersome procedures that often discourage the selection and placement of the best candidates (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999).

The fact that teachers are not required to give notice until shortly before the school year begins also created a ripple effect on attrition and hiring. In situations like this, principals could not post vacancies until late into the summer and while there were still

teachers in the applicant pool, those candidates may not be as experienced or as desirable as those that were hired in late spring or early summer. The hiring practices at Smith were also stalled because of the highly transient student population; as class sizes increased due to burgeoning enrollment through the summer and into the first weeks of school, teachers needed to be added to the staff roster in order to meet teacher to student ratios as mandated by Title I and other district policies. Tara described how teachers were often brought on board at Smith at the last minute, “Debbie’s interviewing at the last minute all the time. Even a lot of our teachers that started on time got the word, like one week before school started”. Many of the novice teachers at Smith were familiar with the experience of being a late hire and they all affirmed what a setback it was for them, both in terms of physical and mental preparation. These issues will be described in more detail in the Teacher Traits section of this chapter.

Organizational Vision at Smith Elementary School

Within the micro-level organization of schools, there are distinct patterns of behavior and influence. There are also personal and collectively shared understandings that are intertwined with the history of the school (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002b). At Smith Elementary School, Debbie seems to have a clear vision of the type of instruction and professional culture that should be happening, but teachers may not entirely agree or see how this vision applies to them and their students.

School culture is unique to the people and events that take place within the distinct context of a particular school setting. Like many schools, at Smith Elementary School, educational practices and priorities are defined by the vision and mission. Posted on the school's website, the Smith Elementary School staff vision states, “We, the staff of Smith

Elementary, will be world class professionals”, while the Smith Elementary School staff mission reads, “We will come prepared; we will know our curriculum; we will collaborate together and communicate with others in a positive way; at Smith Elementary, education is a team effort”. As part of the school's collective vision, the saying “Responsible---Response-Able” was seen posted in many classrooms. Debbie described the collaborative development of the school vision, stating:

We do it together, as part of the school plan. When we sit down with our school improvement plan and we look at the district's strategic plan and the targets for the goals there and then we look at where we are in terms of those targets. We have divided up into different groups, but the first thing we start with is, we have the gaps and all, where is it that we want to be, this is where the district says they want all their schools to be. So we spent, and we will do it again this year, the last day of school, we look at it think does this say what we think we're about? We have a conversation about it with the whole staff in the room and everybody's allowed to have their input and conversation, as we change a few things every year.

Debbie's depicted the development of the school vision as a joint endeavor among school staff. She also went on to describe how the school's vision fits in with the district vision by explaining:

The county thing is a world class education, which I think that came in with the new Superintendent. My attitude is always we're supposed to be aligned with the district, so I don't go too far afield from that. To look at it in terms of our population, that it would be a world class education for all and that, because it's a Title I school, making AYP and making sure all the sub-groups and all the children

achieve is important. I think that the teachers here are very much cognizant of looking at having individual sub-groups and that's different now from when I first came here.

While it is commendable to have a positive and clearly stated vision and mission statement, these words are meaningless if school leaders and staff are not collaboratively engaged in efforts to put the words into action. The teachers in the study did not mention their involvement in the creation of the vision or mission, which makes it less meaningful and impactful for them and the work they do.

Although teachers in their first year may not have had an opportunity to be involved in conversations about the school improvement plan, they are provided with general information about the overall culture at Smith, albeit in a limited and superficial way. Debbie explained:

When we pull teachers in from the very beginning when we have the school day here that's a part of the FIRST orientation, we talk about the school improvement plan and we have the mentors there with them. They get to know who people are, helping them become comfortable and familiar with where things are in the school and also comfortable with where the curriculum is, where the materials are, what the makeup of the kids are in their room.

The initial meeting provided teachers with an overview of school priorities and activities, as an induction into the school community. Debbie asserted her perception that teachers at Smith are aware of, and invested in, the vision of the school.

They do a very good job of it and that's where I do think the data bears out, that people here live the vision. We don't really have a gap, when we look at tests,

there's maybe from the highest to the lowest in the range around a certain formative assessment five points, so if you've got a five point spread and that goes up and down among the groups, then everybody's moving along together and that's really what you want to see, that you've got forward movement and that you're keeping your little ducklings as close together as you can. Now you have the occasional stray here and there, but there are a variety of reasons for that and even with that, you're keeping up with them and if they're struggling and you keep trying to move through those tiers of intervention to get them whatever it is they need.

Beyond the vision and mission that exist on paper, it is important to understand how those words play out in the hearts and minds of students, parents, teachers, and administrators in the everyday school context. When teacher participants were asked about the culture of Smith Elementary School, they presented a vastly divergent perspective than the one presented by Debbie. Throughout the upcoming sections of this chapter, there will be numerous references to teacher perspectives about the pressures of assessment and data-driven instruction and absence of productive teacher interaction.

Beginning teachers impact the context of a school in many ways as they make an entrance and learn to navigate the micropolitics that are before them. In thinking about what a positive school climate looks like, teachers had the perception that assemblies and public forms of recognition would be evidence that the principal values teacher collegiality and student recognition. Dana explained how such activities are absent at Smith.

I am a first year teacher and I have not had much experience at any other schools. I would say the atmosphere is not as happy at this school. Some other schools are happy-go-lucky, they really put in the positive reinforcement, just for example on

the announcements that this kid did such and such. This is an awesome school and the teachers are actually very friendly, but the only thing I would say is the positive reinforcement is not as big in the school, specifically for the students.

Alex agreed with Dana, stating, "This is my first school and I think the people here are amazing, but there's not a lot of fun going around here." Some of the novice teachers related having school-wide student assemblies as an indication of school culture. Isabelle commented that "We haven't had an assembly all year," and Casey went on to state:

We did used to have our SOAR assemblies, which were something that that kids looked forward to and enjoyed at the end of the marking period, but that was even taken away from them and left up to the grade levels to do something individually.

Teachers felt that the interpersonal connections and sense of unity are lacking within the school, which has a resulting impact on the collective norms and overall micropolitics at Smith.

Novice teacher Mary also explained that they rarely "have anything where the teachers are doing things together, third, fourth and fifth probably know each other and I'm sure first, second and Kindergarten know each other down there," and relates knowing other teachers to the proximity to one another, following up to say, "because we're on the second floor and they're on the first floor we just never see each other".

As Schempp, Sparkes, and Templin (1993) found, "New members change as they affiliate with an institution and the organization changes as new members usher in fresh ideas and unique ways of acting," (p. 448). Because social power is a part of the daily functioning and long-term acceptance in a school, new teachers at Smith quickly became cognizant of their place and the place of others within the school. As Tara explained, there

are cliques and favorites in the school and those preferential relationships can drive decision-making and action at the administrative and teacher levels.

The beginning teachers seemed less fazed by these social gaps and more concerned with the collective way that academic instruction is defined and enacted at Smith. Understanding and adapting to school culture can be quite distinct from learning to teach children in classrooms (Schempp, Sparkes & Templin, 1993), but learning to navigate both aspects of a school are critical to a new teacher's success.

Collective Vision on Assessment

Debbie asserted that the push for assessment and now moving into online testing is driven by federal policies and the prevailing philosophy that student performance will inevitably improve if teachers engage in steadfast efforts to monitor student progress and differentiate instruction for a wide range of student needs. This puts pressure on teachers and administrators at all levels of the K-12 system and discourages them from using developmentally appropriate practices in favor of assessment at all costs. It also presents the assumption that data and assessments are silver bullets that will undoubtedly lead to increased student achievement. Unfortunately, Debbie felt that she was in a conundrum as to how to best mediate these differing objectives:

The test atmosphere in this country has held the teacher's feet to the fire that are in the grade levels that test, but those are cumulative tests, so K, 1 and 2, their performance is actually on the third grade test too. If you don't want the students to be overwhelmed, they have to have a certain level that they have been moved along to or they're going to be deer in the headlights.

Principals define the reality of life in schools create symbolic meaning through the use of language (Anderson, 1991). It became clear that through the individual interviews with the principal and each of the novice teachers that the depictions of their individual and collective experiences at Smith are varied in ways that reflect divergent perspectives on many of the same topics.

Novice teachers seem to truly understand what is instructionally important, but do not always feel they have the autonomy to teach accordingly. Isabelle talked about her position as a social studies teacher and the frustration she feels that the subject is not deemed a priority because it not a tested subject. Mary also shared her annoyance that the expectations placed on teachers are unrealistic given the demographics at Smith.

The fact that we're expected, county and state wide, to make these data numbers that schools across the county are making is about as realistic as me going to the moon, because that's just not how the real world works. I know that they cannot set the standards differently because that wouldn't look good either, but you cannot expect the same results out of a school like this as you're getting out of the school where my children go and you shouldn't be punished because you cannot produce it. That's just it, you cannot blame the teachers for something that we only can do so much.

Again, Mary has drawn a comparison between the teachers at Smith and the parents of Smith, assuming that their value systems are so different that there are instructional consequences for the students and teachers at Smith. Alex also pointed out that the testing requirements are not always reasonable or developmentally appropriate.

My problem with assessments is that it's great because you do know where they're at, but when we have to do it constantly, that means I have to give up time, in guided reading, to assess them. It takes a while since I'm dealing with Kindergarteners, I have to do letter, sounds, all one-on-one and it takes instructional time to assess.

The internal conflict that teachers like Alex feel is often compounded by the external pressures that are placed on them by school and district requirements. Karen expressed the perplexity she felt when she arrived at Smith to see that assessment was of chief importance.

I was really surprised because where I student taught in [another part of the state], you actually take over the entire aspect of the classroom for a couple of months and I did first grade. So I student taught my grade that I have and beside her grade book there was no grade-wide assessment. They did plan and co-teach together, but there was no assessment or data to be reported to the principal and all these other Baldridge data [a data analysis system in use at Smith] and so I was so shocked by the excessive amounts of data that we have to report.

The inconsistency in approaches to teaching and learning that these novice teachers were confronted with in their previous exposure to schools as opposed to their initial experience at Smith demonstrate the diversity of interests that exist in a micropolitical school environment.

Collective Vision: Theory Versus Practice

Teachers also recalled that what they were taught in their teacher preparation programs, and even in the district induction and trainings, conflicts with what they are

expected to do at Smith. Good and Brophy (2008) described this issue of conflict between the theoretical knowledge novice teachers bring to the school and the practices endorsed within the school. They come into the school thinking that their instructional methods should involve movement and hands-on activities and that they should get students involved in fun, engaging activities that are aligned with the standards and the curriculum. Upon arrival at Smith, they find that these same priorities do not necessarily exist. Casey explained that what was taught in the district induction program and how it is not promoted at the school level.

That's another thing that is contradictory with what they tell us in the county. In FIRST we were told when the bum is numb, the brain is dumb, or something like that (laughs). That's the gist of it, but then here we're basically told, okay, no fun stuff, have the kids sitting and working, drill and kill. There's no kind of consistency.

The teachers in the study showed a sense of frustration with the conflicting messages they received from different sources. Isabelle recalled a comparable situation that took place in her first year.

I was taught in college we do hands-on as much as possible. Last year, I was teaching science and social studies and the assistant principal told me to stop doing that and to drill and kill and I was almost crying. What I was taught does not match up to what I've got to do here, it doesn't.

Isabelle's experience is one of several examples where teachers felt demoralized in their teaching role. Dana explained another experience that was shared with her by a colleague.

Another teacher in the building was getting an observation where the students were up and moving around. That's the way I was taught in school that they need to be, I think third graders are supposed to be up every fifteen minutes moving around. She told me that the principal came in and she said, 'why don't you have them in their desks? They should've been writing this in their interactive notebook so they could be taking it home at the end of the year to study for the SOL test.' So again, this is a very different experience.

Casey also summarized the thoughts expressed by others, saying, "I have found that student teaching from college is a joke compared to what you're given here." Although Schein (1992) defined organizational culture as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems," (p. 12), it is apparent that the micropolitical state at Smith has developed in such a way that teachers are compelled to employ practices that they do not truly believe in.

Through all of these comments, these teachers asserted that their expectations about how they would be able to use their knowledge and skills were not met when they arrived at Smith. The assumptions made about how to enact current best practices in the classroom were not shared by novice teachers, veteran teachers, and administrators.

Furthermore, teachers are expected to abide by the bureaucratic policies adopted at the state and district levels and are often given little support in this area. Teachers explained the challenges they have had with the certification procedures within the district and the state. Tara described that novice teachers should not focus on earning their

additional credits within their first year, as there will be time for that in subsequent years. Only those teachers who are on probationary licenses and haven't met full credentialing requirements are obligated to fulfill recertification points within the first year. Mary and Isabelle both shared their frustrations with the certification procedures and the lack of consistent information about their requirements, especially having received their original teaching license from out of the state. Isabelle explained that she will seek information from colleagues or the principal and will often look at the state's website, but that it was often a challenge to obtain the correct information and in a timely manner. Casey further explained his experience.

Some of the stuff with the county, with the things they say are kind of contradictory because things in writing say that you have a year from your hire date to have your certification tests out of the way and then similar to Isabelle, I was told in October that I had to have the rest because I took the Praxis when I was in New York in anticipation of moving down here. I was told in October that I had to take the VRA and VCLA and have them both passed by December 15th, so I had one shot to take them both in that time frame.

For these novice teachers, the added pressure of maintaining their certification adds to all of the other challenges they have with being a new teacher.

Schools are controlled by bureaucratic procedures like rules, policies, and regulations which are under the control of principals. They may exercise their formal and informal authority to monitor and evaluate teachers' adherence to those procedures (Ingersoll, 2004a). As discussed in another section of this chapter, principals are often torn between leadership as management and monitoring of policies and leadership as

instructional support. This is especially true of administrators who are new to the role, which does not apply to Debbie, with seven years of experience as a principal at Smith. Because she has the experience and should have the skills to effectively balance the myriad demands of leadership, there should be a greater attention to the instructional aspects of the school and less attention to the bureaucratic controls that may occupy a novice principal.

The lack of contact with their colleagues and the inattention to student-centered instructional practices are part of the micropolitical reality for teachers at Smith. Since it is important to constantly bring the focus of action at Smith back to student achievement, it almost appears that this is such a singular focus that it is sought after at the expense of other worthy goals. Teachers feel burdened and worn down by the constant pressure to be data-focused and assessment-driven. As Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002b) contended, "the school as an organization lives by certain traditions and habits, or more or less subtle power relations between (groups of) school members, with different interests. In other words, the beginning teacher is confronted with a micro-political reality in his or her job situation" (p. 107), in which novice teachers are expected to observe the existing ideologies and conform to the current practices at Smith.

Academic Instruction

As described in Chapter II, I have related academic instruction to school micropolitics in such a way that the principal's leadership capacity, specifically her ability to engage in instructional leadership to guide the overall academic program at the school, had an important effect on the overall experience for teachers and students. Several researchers have asserted that effective schools have principals who promote professional growth through specific acts of offering advice and intervention with instructional issues,

supporting collaboration, facilitating coaching relationships, making time for peer connections, and applying the principles of adult learning, growth, and development to professional development activities (Blase & Anderson, 1995; Blase & Blase, 1999; Greenfield, 1991; Hargreaves, 1991; Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996; Malen & Cochran, 2008). The overall micropolitical theme throughout this section is that the school principal has a strong role to play in the selection and use of specific academic programs, methods, and supports.

Teaching and learning are central to the work that is done in schools and the teachers in the study had some interesting views about how curriculum and instruction takes place. This section will outline the discrepant views of the teachers and the principal with respect to instructional priorities and methods for meeting students' academic needs. This section will also present a discussion of the leadership style the principal enacts in order to achieve her goals for academics at Smith. Finally, a detailed description of the ways that novice teachers are provided with support to become more proficient in their teaching role and the prevailing professional development methodology at Smith is addressed, with attention to the induction and mentoring programs in place for novice teachers. Since "power in organizations is seldom exercised in overt, observable ways" (Blase and Anderson, 1995, p. 138), the micropolitical themes that are revealed in this section point to the fact that schools have embedded ideologies and practices that many times are exposed in covert and indirect ways through the central activity of academic instruction.

Instructional Priorities

As Blase & Anderson (1995) contended, "Power is more commonly embedded in the work process itself and the organizational vocabulary through which the work is defined" (p. 138). The priorities and expectations conveyed at Smith, in direct messages sent by the principal, and in indirect ways, as a function of prevailing norms, tended to be largely misaligned with knowledge about current best practice for academic instruction.

Teachers discussed the challenges they experienced with managing the expectations for teaching and learning at Smith. They described several scenarios in which they were placed in the position of often having to make sacrifices in their instructional choices. While many of the curricular programs used at Smith are useful for teachers and students, teachers felt overwhelmed by the increasing number of programs they were expected to use, and the feeling that they were never able to learn and use a program effectively before another one came along.

Teachers discussed their struggle with trying to fit in all of the varied programs that they are expected to do. In talking about the many and different curricular initiatives that are adopted at Smith, Mary explained her perspective.

I know some programs are county-wide, like the math investigations all of the elementary schools have to use, but the writing programs I believe are school-based and I don't know how that's decided. But I think that we jump on something and everybody's all gung-ho, then we try it for a year or two and it's out the window (laughs). We're trying something else and the downfall to that is that you cannot get comfortable with anything enough to learn it, be able to do it, and be good at it and also that there's no consistency then through the grade levels.

Mary's annoyance relates to the decision-making processes more than the actual programs because she expressed that there is no consideration for the time needed for curricular programs to take hold before moving onto the next initiative. Casey agreed with Mary, saying:

It seems like here, our school always seems to want to be the first to jump on the wagon with something and not necessarily follow something through so that it can work the way it should. Rather, almost every single new thing that comes up we jump on the bandwagon with, so instead of getting better at something, we're always working on something new.

Casey almost seemed resigned to the fact that this is the norm at Smith and he has become accustomed to switching programs frequently. Karen explained that in managing her own classroom and meeting the needs of her students, something has to give. Alex followed up, saying, "I haven't done handwriting because I haven't been trained and things start to get, I start to prioritize." The teachers recognized that these curricular programs have merit but they are not able to be effective because of the short life span many programs experience at Smith. As beginning teachers who are trying build up their repertoire of experiences, these novices are frustrated with the constant changes in programs and priorities.

Teachers did speak about some of the instructional programs that they have found to be useful with their students. Alex and Casey talked about using word study and PALs, and Alex commented, "Word study is amazing and my PAL scores, the writing part of it, my lowest kids got a nineteen out of twenty, because of the word study," and Casey agreed, saying:

From second grade, I agree with that, the word study, because I just gave my PALs spelling test today and I have kids who were having trouble before who have picked up a lot with their spelling and have gotten a lot more of those features than before we had done much with it.

These teachers shared that when they find something that works for their students, they tend to run with it, and at times it may be at the expense of some other things, because in the words of Alex, "Oh absolutely, yeah, I cannot do it all!".

In addition to there being a myriad of curricular programs to implement, teachers also struggled with the limited nature of the instructional strategies that were encouraged for use at Smith, stressing that fun and creativity were often forsaken for the data-driven methods that may or may not meet their students' unique developmental and learning needs. Dana described an instance that gave her pause about her instructional strategies:

We were going to do a simple machine scavenger hunt, walking around outside and I was nervous. The students had their clipboards and I had a little chart for them, but I told them 'come on let's do this real quick', because I thought they were going to get into trouble for me being outside. I was supposed to be in class, so I almost had to sneak and do it and we did it real fast and we came back in, but I felt like this is something that I'm not supposed to be doing.

Dana's experience pointed to the fact that teachers are aware that their perception of quality instruction does not necessarily match up with the principal's perception of quality instruction. This mismatch caused anxiety as novice teachers attempted to balance the requirements placed on them, but still tried to meet the academic needs of their students in research-based and proven ways. Isabelle went on to explain the situation in fourth grade.

Our scores weren't up to par, so any free time we had was taken from us. I was told to stop teaching science because it's not a fourth grade tested SOL and to teach math in my spare time. Any spare time I had was to be devoted to math, at the end of the day when we do writing, that was taken away and we do math. So even if I wanted to plan something fun, I don't have the luxury of fitting it in anywhere.

Again, Isabelle expressed that the focus on tested grades must come first, and often at the expense of other valuable subjects or activities. Although this expectation was embedded within the collective norms at the school, there had to have been spoken communication about these priorities at some point in the past. Galbraith (1983) presents the notion of conditioned or normative power, in which subtle conditioning is used so people come to believe that "what is" is the way it "should" be. There is an underlying sense that instruction aimed at assessment goals is the primary concern for the principal at Smith, and as such, it should also be the primary concern for teachers.

Moreover, these novice teachers expressed their desire to make learning fun for their students. Isabelle said:

Other places are fun. I'm not saying that all of them are fun, but I find that if I don't act a fool each day...I will dance, I will sing and if I don't act a fool and get those kids laughing and smiling, they would leave here beating their heads on the wall as they're walking down the hallway and I would be right there behind them doing the same thing.

Alex followed that thought with her own, saying, "I have my kindergarteners moving, I mean today we did the musical chairs for the sight words so they come in and they have a

blast, but they have to move around". Karen expanded on the comments made by others, saying:

I have a friend that she was in my cohort student teaching and she works at a school in this county and we talk about how the different assessments and she does have to do data and Baldrige. I think it's the principal supports the fun activities and as much as she can get them up moving and, she gave me an idea we did, it was freeze tag, but with sight words and so it's just they encourage you to do those fun outside things and if it meets the curriculum, do it, but I don't feel that support here. And I actually did it and I took them out there, another fourth grade class went out there with us and we did a double class, but I feel like you're kind of hiding when you do.

These teachers were discouraged by the unspoken expectation that teacher-led, more traditional types of instruction were encouraged and welcomed at Smith, while other more student-centered methods were frowned upon. Casey summed up this discussion by remarking that with another "colleague that I talk to and who tells me they've done this, this, this and this and I have to be honest with him, 'yeah, that wouldn't fly where I am' ".

When probed further about whether a teacher could justify their instructional activities and ensure that they are aligned with the standards and the curriculum, how well that would be received by administrators, Alex mentioned:

No, there's not a problem with that, except that right now I'm not supposed to be doing maps and globes. I'm supposed to be working on states of matter, so it's all that I've been doing, PALs testing and a bunch of other stuff, so I haven't gotten around to it but I promised [the students] and so we're going to compress states of

matter. I think that as long as you can justify what you're doing you'll be okay, you know, make a strong point.

Casey concurred that "It has to be very strong, key word strong (laughs)". Karen and Casey also mentioned that there is a fear of recourse for their instructional decisions. Karen said:

I hope that if it were to come to that, that it would be okay, but I still think that I would feel like I was being reprimanded for it. It might just be because I feel like I don't want to do something wrong and I'm scared that I might do something wrong.

Karen's apprehension about her instructional decisions was shared by Casey, who went on to state that:

I think that from people I have talked to, especially in my grade level, that seems to be the general consensus of people afraid of getting reprimanded for doing certain things that are legitimate, but almost have the fun aspect to it also.

Alex and Dana concluded by saying that even veteran teachers wouldn't do any fun activities because like Dana said, "They've jumped on board with the testing (laughs)". Again, evidence is presented to demonstrate that within the micropolitics of the school, there are embedded philosophies about what good teaching looks like and how teachers can strive to meet the instructional and assessment goals for their students. Those norms are frequently in stark contrast to the professional expectations and desires that novice teachers possess when they enter the school.

Data-driven Practices

In addition to the pressures teachers felt to take on too many curricular initiatives, and to steer away from fun and creative instructional techniques, there was also a heightened attention to data-driven practices at Smith Elementary School. From the

teachers' perspective, the focus on assessments and data was a burden and was in conflict with their natural desire to make learning fun for their students. Casey explained that "within the last couple of weeks at a staff meeting we were actually told that this whole Baldridge and data collection thing, this is going to be the way of the entire county here before long," and Alex agreed, saying:

The data thing is not going to go away. I understand, it is important. I can go look at my last tracking form and go, 'well, so and so is not making progress.' But I can see that I don't really need that, I know who cannot count to ten, I know who cannot recognize numbers, I don't need to assess someone constantly. And I'm a big on believing that learning should be fun, it should be a lot of fun activities and stuff, but no.

Teachers seemed to be resigned to the fact that the data-driven focus is a given and that as novice teachers, they were relatively powerless in deciding what and how to implement instruction in their classrooms. Karen described that in the primary grade she taught that data is still a priority.

That's not a SOL grade and we still have to teach data, data, data, data to the assessments. We have to weekly assess them, just one subject and that's grade-wide and then at the end of the year we have to give them a standardized test also. It's not the SOL it's a different assessment, but every subject and it's forty questions per subject and at first grade, we get a report back and it says the student does or not know these objectives, these SOLs. But I don't agree that they do or do not know it based on the test, which is a whole different issue. Even in first grade it's assessment-driven, data-driven and the tests don't take into account the different

needs of the students. Things like that, like we're taught to do Bloom's Taxonomy and multiple intelligences, but the test just doesn't match and it's not copasetic.

Teachers like Karen were aware that the practices they were being asked to use are not developmentally appropriate and would likely not help them to attain their instructional goals. This conflict was challenging for beginning teachers to navigate. Casey followed up by stating:

There is not all of the fun activities and stuff, unfortunately, because we are so data-driven, expecting and needing the students to do so well on the tests and stuff that that's what we put out there first. We need to just teach them what they need to know for the test and unfortunately we let the rest of the stuff go by the wayside.

Casey described the misplaced priorities as unfortunate and the tone of his voice displayed his resignation with the situation at Smith. Isabelle went on to explain the contrast in school cultures that she has seen within the school district.

I've been in my daughter's school and it's a completely different atmosphere, culture, what have you. We put a lot of pressure on our students and they see the pressure on our faces. I think I've given my kids, 'cause they're an SOL grade, three practice reading SOLs this year, three practice math SOLs, and you wonder why sometimes they don't do well and so it's drill, drill, drill, drill, drill, no downtime. So we're worn out, you can imagine how worn out they are, and I think that we forget that they're kids. That is my gripe, and if anything would make me not want to be a teacher anymore it would be that.

Isabelle's comment about the assessment-focus being the downfall to her satisfaction with being a teacher pointed to the fact that the decisions made about instructional priorities and

programs have a large impact on teachers as well as students. Casey and Isabelle summed up the conversation, with Casey saying, "There needs to be some kind of balance," and Isabelle concluding, "I still want to teach". The frustrations of the teachers were obvious in their comments on the topic of data and assessments and their professional judgment and feelings about these matters cannot be undermined and disregarded.

Alternatively, the principal viewed data and assessments at the school in a much different way. Throughout the visits to the school, Debbie made multiple references to the importance of data and how the scores have such a large effect on the school. She talked about how the writing scores were at 86% passing and they needed 84%, which she described as "living on the edge", but stressed that "at least we passed". It became clear that data was important and a priority at Smith, because the topic came up frequently, even in informal conversations and she also described in detail the assessment goals for Smith. Her desire to convey the precise data that was expected and achieved for students at Smith indicated that this was forefront in her mind as a school priority.

When asked about how well the teachers have responded to the push to use data and assessments to inform their instruction, Debbie explained that teachers live the vision, paying attention to the gaps between student groups, and finding ways to bridge those gaps. In her conversations with teachers, she made an effort to stress the importance of data, making comments like, "Remember to look at the student data to decide what to do [for student instruction during the resource sessions]." Unfortunately, teachers at Smith did not share the same zeal for data-driven decision-making that Debbie was attempting to promote. While many teachers understood and expressed the importance of such practices, they did not believe that they should be the sole method for attaining student achievement.

Novice teachers tended to engage in strategic compliance, picking and choosing their battles, in order to maintain positive working relations at the school. The issue of strategic compliance will be discussed further in a later section of this chapter, as it is a mechanism for teachers to neutralize their experience and minimize their conflict with the principal.

Instructional Leadership

There is a sense that organization and efficiency are strengths of the principal, and Blase and Anderson (1995) considered these to be traits that exemplify how principals show respect for teachers' time, particularly with respect to faculty meetings and expectations about paperwork. It appears that the novice teachers at Smith saw these types of activities as more indicative of Debbie's leadership. As she developed structural conditions at the school, she aligned more closely with management tasks than those activities that supported teaching and learning.

For the teachers at Smith Elementary School, the nature of professional development and instructional guidance was such that existing norms guided current practices. "In integrated cultures, the organized structures for support, the norms for how work gets done, and the prevailing attitudes and beliefs about collegiality and professional growth were embedded in the school's professional culture," (Kardos et al., 2001, p. 275). Since Debbie had been the principal at Smith for seven years, her leadership practices were ingrained in the school culture. As such, the hierarchical and authoritative style of leadership that she enacted allowed her to strategically manage and control the school's routines and procedures, personnel assignments and evaluations, and professional development opportunities (Ingersoll, 2003; Malen & Cochran, 2008). While Debbie did have the authority and the influence to reign over curriculum and academic matters, she

controlled the key material and informational resources which teachers needed to access in order to be effective, and she often did so in ways that were counterproductive to teachers' instructional needs.

Research over the past several decades has indicated that principals play an integral role in not only shaping the school culture, but to also engage in strategic management of instructional matters such as professional development opportunities and performance evaluations (Malen & Cochran, 2008). The hierarchical and authoritative nature of the principal's role was referred to by Ingersoll (2003c) and was evidenced at Smith as Debbie allowed teachers to have limited influence over instructional matters, but she still maintained control over essential information and resources.

Debbie focused a great deal of her time and energy on management tasks associated with running the school, often it seemed at the expense of instructional needs of teachers and students. She spoke about how her instructional guidance was needed more during the early part of the school year, stating:

I think that the first of the year starts off very much heavy in instruction and it stays that way until about spring break and then after spring break where I'm fairly certain where we are with instruction and that people are on task and doing what they need to do, that decreases somewhat. So basically when you move into late April and May, your instruction program is fairly solid.

This approach to leadership maintained a very limited scope of influence over instructional matters. While Debbie contended that she was heavily focused on instruction in the early months of the school year, there was little other evidence to support how she was exercising that leadership in ways that directly impacted teachers. As Sergiovanni (1996)

and Deal and Peterson (1994) asserted, the principal may be driven by ideas, values, passion, and purpose, and can at times balance those strains of moral leadership with the more structural tasks of leadership. In the case at Smith, Debbie spoke at length about her ideals for education as a whole, and for the school community at Smith, in particular, but the data did not present a clear picture of whether the teachers also supported the idea that these ideals meaningfully infiltrated her leadership practices.

Despite the fact that Colley (2002) mentioned three primary roles for leaders in supporting new teachers, that of instructional leader, culture builder, and mentor coordinator, there is not adequate evidence that Debbie was fully engaged in those roles to properly support the novice teachers at Smith. As an element of micropolitics, the way that leadership roles are enacted in schools is influential in fostering student achievement and teacher professional development. As Ashby (1996) and Blase and Roberts (1994) contended, effective principals use various strategies to influence teachers and instruction. When used for the benefit of teachers and students, and in efforts to meet the overall goals of the school, these efforts are worthwhile. Several examples were presented in the case study at Smith indicating that Debbie was not engaging in leadership best practices for the betterment of the school.

Through an active physical presence and responsiveness in the school building, principals demonstrate for new teachers the importance of administrative support and collegiality for professional growth and instructional improvement. While she did speak about employing specific instructional activities in her daily routines, such as formal and informal class visits and discussion with teachers about their practices, it was not clear in the communications with teachers that these interactions were being productive and

moving them toward professional and personal growth. When asked about walkthroughs, Debbie stated:

I like to see if what's being taught is where they're supposed to be in the curriculum. I look to see if the content vocabulary is being taught in a way that the kids know what the teacher's talking about because if they're out drilling, I go in and look at the teacher's lesson plan book that they're supposed to have out on their desk. I'm looking to see how engaged the students are, and we have a thing called teachscape that has, you can go around and you don't collect the data by teachers, but there are different things you can look for. What types of strategies the teachers are using, what is the task that the kids have, how highly engaged are the students, what type of questioning is being used, there's a variety of things that I want to see one that the kids are engaged in the classroom. I like to see that they're using differentiation in some ways, so the kids that are not reading on grade level, that the materials that they have in front of them is more appropriate to their abilities.

Debbie's authoritative approach to classroom visits was reflected in the teachers' perceptions that they were being judged by her. Debbie also spoke about her interactions with the students in the school.

Kids know that my question is, what are you learning today, what are you learning about and they should be able to tell me what it is that they're doing, so when the lesson's over, 'what are you going to know and what are you going to be able to do?'. They pretty much can tell me.

By probing students for information, Debbie attempted to gain more insight into the instruction happening in the classroom. Karen talked about "when we get observed, she'll

come and sit at our desk and kind of flip through [lesson plans], so and you never really know when she's going to come", insinuating that the visits were less about what was happening with the instruction, but more about what was written in the plan book.

As one of the only examples of teacher-principal interaction that was focused on instructional support, Debbie described the data meetings that take place on Thursdays.

We're looking at data and remediation, we're looking at pacing and I'm asking 'what else do we need?'. If there's staff development that's needed or support from Title I, if it's the math is going down, or do we need to pull somebody from the central office. I see we've got the collaborative team here, but I've been to central office and we've got some people who really are very good about coming in and working with different groups, as situations arise to help them do the job for the kids.

Debbie's explanation of supports for teachers primarily centered on the ways external resources could be obtained. As explained by Debbie, the data meetings allowed for the principal and the teachers to collaborate to improve student achievement.

It's not just one person working with a child, but we work it as a team. It's kind of like a relay race, one person that can do something gets passed, the child is passed to them for them to work in their specialty, then they come back to the classroom teacher with the idea of trying to get that child as far ahead as they can and close the gap between them and their peers, providing the skills that the standards of learning teach now.

In Debbie's view, the data meetings were highly interactive and productive for teachers. Based on my observations of the data meetings, I would agree with novice teacher Isabelle as she characterized the meetings as slightly less important. She said:

It's just, go over testing dates, things that are important, nothing really, or if there's something that Debbie wants us to talk about, supply list for the next year, or it's just a set day also that if you have something to bring to the table, like field trips and things like that, that you can be on the same page.

As data meetings were observed, it appeared that they were rather systematic, with Debbie glancing at the team's data binder and talking in general about what it said and next steps. The conversations that were observed seemed to be largely one-sided and did not necessarily involve the entire team. There was often a bit of jumping around from topic to topic or other points for discussion were raised by teachers toward the end of the meeting.

In other observations at Smith, Debbie was seen participating in a grade-level planning meeting in which she sat back away from the group, popping in with a comment or question occasionally. It appeared that the team was not accustomed to having the principal involved in an informal meeting like this. Debbie's instructional guidance was on target, with suggestions such as creating a flowchart with the steps needed for different math processes or mentioning that maybe students need a visual. While Debbie made some valid recommendations, such as encouraging the teachers to talk to the art teacher to coordinate with their geometry lessons or to look in the resource room for ideas, the teachers did not necessarily seem to welcome her advice. One teacher responded, "That's a lot of prep though". In positive examples of instructional leadership and positive micropolitical interactions presented by Blase and Blase (1999), teachers are engaged in

discussions of alternatives, not simply following directives or criticisms and teachers and principals are working together as a community of learners.

As Blase and Anderson (1995) contended, the principalship was once more of a "principal-teacher" role, but has become increasingly less loyal to teachers and instead focuses more on the status differential between the two roles. Many of her comments made it clear that she understood the instructional matters, especially in the comments made at the data meetings, but it was not apparent whether she perceived this to be her primary role in her exchanges with teachers. As Fullan (2002) discussed, leaders can positively influence the learning culture of a school or they can ignore this important role, leading teachers to feel helpless, frustrated, and isolated, often leading to their departure from the school or the profession.

Debbie also spoke about how some of the more experienced teachers at Smith act as her eyes and ears in order to obtain assistance for novice teachers who may have struggled. She said:

I've had a couple of times where people would be struggling and I have other teachers that step in and say, 'I think you need to know this is going on with this person and they haven't come to you and said anything'. Not in the way of tattling, but they kind of talk about what it is you think they need.

She also mentioned a specific teacher who had a rough start last year and was placed on an action plan but doing much better this year. She said that she "wants teachers to know we'll help them". Teachers expressed the perception that student learning is important at Smith, but that they had a hard time distinguishing whether the principal fully supported them as individual teachers aiming to reach the goal of student success.

It is telling that teachers at Smith do not view Debbie as their instructional leader, and in fact, they do not even expect her to serve that role. Mary stated:

She is the boss and she is the principal. She's the leader, whatever you want to call it, so I think her job is more business than instructional. You know, I don't think she's supposed to be instructing us so much as doing the business role.

This notion of leadership coincides with the idea that teachers tend not to view principals as experts on classroom practice; their lack of respect for the principals' professional and instructional knowledge undermines the authority they carry with their title (Biklen, 1983; Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980).

Beyond the instructional support that teachers desire, Karen expressed the disappointment she felt in handling a challenging situation with the student and parent. She felt equally frustrated by the lack of support and guidance she had from her administrators in this matter.

I did not want them to think that I couldn't do my job. I asked for help and they kind of said, deal with it on your own and so I wasn't going to go back and say, it's really bothering me, but it did, it did really bother me. It really bothered me that they did not step in and say something. They could've said something to the parent along the lines of, this is out of line or the way you're speaking to this teacher is inappropriate, those kinds of things. I felt like the parent was borderline harassment, everything that I had gotten that was rude I either took it to them and said, 'you know, this is what she sent me, it's making me feel very uncomfortable, is there anything that you can help me with this?' and they kind of just told me to don't let it bother me.

It was clear that Karen felt despair over this ongoing situation and the lack of administrative support. Karen summed up her overall feelings about the administrative support at Smith.

There were a lot of things I needed (laughs) and a lot of things I needed help with. I got more support from the teachers than from the administration. She [Debbie] went out and bought a whole bunch of stuff for my classroom before I came and there were bags of stuff everywhere. I guess that might be her form of support, but besides that, I think those were the only times that I spoke with her.

Because of the lack of consistent instructional support and authentic guidance, there was a sense among new teachers that the development of strong instructional practices were not highly valued and promoted within the school environment. Rather, teachers felt that the principal supported data-driven practices and assessment strategies above all else, often at the detriment of quality teaching and learning for both students and teachers. Due to the fact that the culture that was developed was not closely aligned with instructional leadership, either on the part of the principal or the teachers, the result was an environment that was breeding further ineffective practices. As new teachers were socialized into this school community that did not fully support or encourage effective practices, poor examples of teaching and leadership played out in a cyclical pattern (Angelle, 2006; Kardos et al., 2001). Blase and Roberts (1994) contended that the use of positive influence strategies, most often used by open and effective principals, should serve as the benchmark for positive micropolitics in schools.

Evaluation of Teacher Performance

As the organization's instructional leader, the principal is the primary source of assistance and monitoring. Whether through formalized evaluation methods, or informal interactions with teachers, principals should engage in meaningful interaction with teachers as a way to not only monitor, but also to enhance the instructional skills of their staff members (Angelle, 2006). By modeling and encouraging effective teaching practices, such efforts can bolster the confidence and lessen the isolation of new teachers. Despite the fact that research shows the positive effects that this type of evaluation can have on teachers, there is evidence that many school administrators continue to exercise formal and informal authority to monitor and evaluate teachers' adherence to procedures (Ingersoll, 2004a). Debbie described herself in the following way.

I am a principal who under instructional leadership am not afraid to use the evaluation system to motivate people to improve. When we put people on action plans, it is to really be very clear about what needs to be worked on and what supports are going to be in place and those supports will include weekly meetings with me to go over what's being worked on. It will include the resources within the building and how those resources will be utilized, attending trainings, but the expectation is that this is tough. You being more successful and if you're more successful you'll feel better about yourself, but more importantly the kids will be learning.

The teachers at Smith contended that formal and informal evaluations were happening as expected, but the quality and effectuality of those evaluations was questionable. Some of the novice teachers felt that the evaluation was not primarily structured in a way that was

intended to help them improve their instructional practices. Alex mentioned that, "She [Debbie] has, she's given me some really interesting feedback, so that has helped, but not much". While Kelchtermans (1993) asserted that beginning teachers often believe that their professional competencies are evaluated only on a limited and partial basis, teachers at Smith had the impression that they were being evaluated constantly, but often in inconsistent ways.

Lead mentor, Tara, spoke about the formal evaluation, the PPP, being a "dog and pony show", which stood in contradiction to the principal's perception that "we're kind of halfway between the old system that was very much the formal dog and pony show...to being the way it's written up is the educational standards that are there for the professional educator...are evidences of those standards in any case, any type of setting". Debbie also contended that the evaluation process "is great for producing knowledge of teachers, it's great for producing for me as well... because what you want is if you truly want people to stay up to date and on the cutting edge, then there has to be something there that makes them really stop and think about that". The fact that the principal viewed the PPP as a more open and flexible form of providing feedback to teachers, was not necessarily shared by Tara.

As teachers at Smith discussed the evaluation process, they mainly referred to the formal evaluations that were required by the district, done at specified points in the year, and seemed to them to be more procedural than instructionally motivating. Karen explained that in her post-evaluation meetings, Debbie spoke more about things that were expected of her as a teacher and did not necessarily provide feedback that could enhance her teaching. In addition, the hierarchy between the principal and the teachers seemed to be

exacerbated during these formal evaluations. Dana's comments about the formal evaluation indicated that "It was more of her [Debbie]...that might have been me not talking because of the intimidation that was there". Many of the teachers spoke about the routine nature of the evaluation and the process for offering feedback, and did not give the impression that these exchanges were useful in their overall professional improvement.

Professional Development Opportunities

At Smith Elementary School, teachers were provided with limited support for their instructional needs, and much of that support was only provided upon teacher request, was fairly inconsistent, and required teachers to participate in isolation. As teachers talked about the instructional guidance and professional development that is available, many were unable to discuss specific ways that support was given at the school level, but were more likely to note the assistance that came from the district level staff.

The instructional support and guidance that was available for teachers at Smith Elementary School generally came in the form of district-level, routine training and coaching. Rather than effecting instructional leadership with the staff at Smith, Debbie deferred to others in the district to fill that role. Teachers and the principal asserted that this support was available on request and while it tended to be helpful when provided, teachers contended that the lack of consistency was problematic. It appeared that efforts to seek out instructional support were also largely reactive, rather than proactive.

Tara talked generally about some of the district trainings that new teachers were required to attend, saying:

They have the technology competencies they've got to get done, and they have to do the suicide prevention and the sexual harassment. Everybody in the county does

that, but when you're doing your first year and you're getting all this, they've got to finish their FIRST training.

This example of routine training was offered to all new teachers and did not necessarily take into account their level of experience or their unique learning styles, and there was certainly no differentiation for the type of setting that teachers would be placed. Mary explained the district's professional development process in more detail.

We have specialists, we have Title I people that are math specialists and Title I people that are reading specialists and then we have the ESOL staff and we have our special ed staff. So there are people that she [Debbie] will tell us who we need to go speak to. You need to deal with this person or you need to write to somebody in the administration building that will know what to do in this situation. So they're good about that as far as recommending who you should be speaking to about certain things if you need this or that.

Mary's depiction of the acquisition of professional development support is largely reactive. Isabelle went on to describe the inconsistent support provided by district support staff.

They give you their email address and you're more than welcome to email and they say they'll get back with you, but there's nobody that comes and really makes sure that you know what you're doing. My favorite part is when they give you a questionnaire and you put on there that you have trouble with this and you'd like information about it, [help] never comes, but I'm sure they're overwhelmed, there's how many teachers in the district.

Isabelle's dismissal of the issue of lack of support is indicative of her resignation about receiving high-quality professional guidance. Mary continued by asserting that the efforts

were valid, but that there was no consistent attempt to follow through and ensure that teacher needs were met.

I think they start off with really good intentions, like this year, when we started the epic [writing program], the reading specialists were supposed to be coming and spending one day a week at least in each of our rooms to help us with it and see how it works and show us all this. But that never happens because everybody starts getting so busy and things just happen and they're not able to come into the room and then that just kind of goes by the wayside, so that's just kind of how (laughs) my experience has been and you're kind of just on your own learning it.

Again, Isabelle's resignation about the lack of support and guidance came shining through in her comments. While there were merits to some of the trainings and the content that was presented, the fact that the professional development opportunities were offered inconsistently left novice teachers feeling as if they were alone in their struggles to adapt to new curriculum and methodologies. Alex was more positive about the impact of the district professional development opportunities she participated in, saying:

Well, I had to go, but it was awesome, the SPOT training and that was great because it helped me with my guided reading and I also took math investigations, it was mandatory as well, but also really good. To implement in the classroom, I would've been totally lost without them. Recently, we just finished a course on word study it was great because it's really helped my class. I noticed that when we did the PALs testing last year they did not do as well in the writing as they did this year. My low child got a twenty out of twenty in the writing and I think because of word study and if we would have been able to take the course early I would've been

able to implement it earlier in the year and they would've done better, much, much better.

Alex's perception was that the district offered decent training opportunities that were aligned with their instructional programs. She asserted that, "As a new teacher I would've been absolutely lost if I wouldn't have had those trainings". Isabelle described a slightly different experience with professional development in the school and the district, saying:

We're always out for some reason or another, like for example this year, all of the fourth grade did epic, which is a writing program and it was once a month we'd go to a different school and it was an all day meeting. There's lots of math, there's lots of reading and science, there's professional development up the wazoo. I think for the most part it's good, I think that sometimes people jump on the bandwagon too quick, like with this epic, I was in epic for two years, come to find out, guess what, next year we're doing a different program.

Karen agreed with Isabelle's assertion that while a lot of training opportunities are made available to teachers, there was often no follow-up to ensure that implementation was happening and to find out whether teachers needed additional levels of support. Alex lamented that "we invested all this money in these books, which we used but then without any training, then once I took the class I realized, oh, that's how to use it (laughs)." Casey followed up to say, "Yeah, we knew it was coming, but like Alex said, we weren't taught at first what to do with it, it was basically figure it out yourself and then this year we had the course". While these teachers could see the value in specific programs and curricular initiatives, they often felt that the support and guidance was lacking to effectively use the new materials or strategies.

Debbie explained how teachers were generally able to access professional development opportunities or instructional support.

They can request it, I'll make a suggestion, you might want to contact so-and-so in ESOL. There are times I'll say, 'well, I was at a principals meeting and, this principal at this school mentioned that they were dealing with this problem this way' or somebody was talking about something really neat they were doing and so we've been emailing back and forth or talking and they're sharing stuff. I've sent teachers to take a class or to observe master teachers in this building and outside of this building. In a reflective way, I want you to be looking at how this teacher addresses these things that we've identified as something the teacher needs to work on and then have a conversation and they usually come back with some ideas, 'I saw this or I saw that or I'm going to try that'.

While Debbie explained some of the ways teachers could be supported, those options were not widely mentioned by the teachers as something that they felt was readily available to them.

Another issue with this level of support was the top-down nature of the assistance; teachers were in a position to request and receive support from someone who was considered to be an "expert" in the topic at hand. This type of instructional guidance can be beneficial to teachers, however it placed teachers in the role of receiving knowledge from an outside source rather than developing their own understanding and learning about the topic. Hargreaves (1991) contended that collegial relationships are more productive because they allow teachers to learn and share with one another, rather than learning from experts. It appeared that teachers at Smith would agree with Blase and Anderson (1995) in

saying that power over instructional matters was held at the district level and was exercised over and through teachers, so that they would be motivated to pursue organizational goals. By focusing teachers at Smith on district-led initiatives and curricular programs, the principal may have assumed that it reflected well on the school, while the actual effect was a detriment to the teachers who were engaged in activities that were not useful to their classroom practices. There was also the sense that if adequate levels of academic achievement were being reached, then it was not entirely necessary for teachers to engage in professional learning. As commented by Debbie, "You will not have as many problems, because when you have engaged kids who are learning, being successful, then everybody's happy campers, including the teacher".

It was a concern that throughout the interviews and conversations with teachers and the principal, that there were no references to some commonly used forms of instructional support; team teaching, collaborative planning, peer coaching, mentor relationships, professional dialogue, and collaborative action research are all widely used forms of instructional leadership that could be enacted by a school principal and were absent at Smith. Debbie even asserted that she spent about \$10,000 on teacher supports over the course of the school year, which was less costly than hiring new teachers. Despite the fact that she seemed to prioritize support for teachers over loss to attrition, teachers were not content with the levels of support they received. In fact, teachers were largely unaware of what types of activities could be characterized as school-level professional development opportunities. Novice teacher Dana said, "I don't know exactly what they offer here at this school, now at some staff meetings we'll have somebody come in from central office give us professional development". Common responses revolved around being trained on

standard procedures and on curricular programs, such as Smart Board training, EPIC training, and Math Investigations training, rather than efforts to promote collaboration and a greater understanding of the big picture of instruction. Teachers also communicated that while there was no shortage of district training opportunities, the quality of those opportunities may have been lacking. Novice teachers at Smith made several comments about the practicality of the training and misalignment of opportunities with the initiatives being promoted. As Cherubini (2007) discussed, if teachers experience a disconnect between the professional development offered and their specific needs as new teachers, the overall effect is not positive. Teachers at Smith would benefit from regular and sustained collaboration and professional learning within their school community.

As teachers at Smith described the ways that support was offered to them, it became clear that there was little opportunity for ongoing, shared learning experiences around instructional matters. As Kardos et al. (2001) asserted, teachers are best served in integrated professional cultures where there is sustained support and ongoing exchange across experience levels for all teachers. Teachers truly benefit from training experiences when there is a mutual exchange of information and a collaborative effort to work toward a common understanding about teaching and learning. Blase and Blase (1999) asserted that by creating a community of learners and engaging in an exchange of ideas and instructional options, a principal can positively impact the teachers in their building. These positive micropolitical activities will encourage teachers to, rather than deter them from, strive toward academic success for their students. As Ashby (1996) studied effective principals, it became clear by appealing to teachers' sense of professional obligations, a principal would achieve more success with teacher groups.

Induction of Novice Teachers

Through the micropolitics of induction, newcomers learn the cultural norms that define the practices of daily school life, which includes patterns of power and the structure of interpersonal relations among the members of the school community. Teacher induction programs are in many schools and districts as the first attempt at socializing novice teachers into the accepted norms and practices. As reported by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF, 2007), the immense costs associated with teacher turnover can be combated with effective induction and mentoring programs that aim to meet the needs of novice teachers at the start of their career. In the current case study, teachers were involved in FIRST, which is a weeklong district-level induction program, and within that week, new teachers were provided a one-day induction at the school building. Smith teachers mainly expressed that the induction program served the purpose of providing information for them as they entered the profession. New teachers Mary and Casey described a program that oriented them to the people and procedures of the school, rather than to expose them to the vision or the instructional goals.

The variability among teacher induction programs is wide and activities range from basic introduction to procedures to full exposure to the instructional goals of the school. Regardless of the content of an induction program, Honaker (2004) asserted that strong induction programs provide the same information to all beginning teachers, giving them a foundation for their work in the school or district. Furthermore, a central purpose of an induction program should revolve around learning and embracing the school vision (Moir & Gless, 2001). Tara mentioned several examples of how she attempted to meet the unique needs of each group of new teachers, which is a practice that aligns well with research by

Olebe (2005) and Smith and Ingersoll (2004), that encourages induction programs to be responsive to teacher and student characteristics and their understandings of teaching and learning as it applies in their specific environment.

At the school level, it was clear that Tara worked hard to ensure that the induction program was tailored to the needs of the new teacher, while also acculturating the new teachers into the practices at Smith. By developing an induction program and support system at the local level, the unique characteristics of the school and the novice teachers can be better met than through standardized programs meant to simply fulfilling a state or district requirement. Smith and Ingersoll (2004) have suggested that common activities included in induction programs are mentoring, collaboration or planning time, seminars for new teachers, and regular meetings with administrators all of which appear to foster the integration of new teachers into the school culture.

At Smith Elementary School, three of the four activity types were used to support beginning teachers. Teachers were given mentoring throughout their first year and mentoring meetings took place monthly to train teachers on relevant topics. A limited level of planning time was required for all teachers at Smith although teachers and principal had opposing thoughts on the effectiveness of these grade-level planning meetings. Discussion will be presented in a later section about the contrived collegiality that resulted from this type of teacher collaboration. Data meetings with administrators were also scheduled weekly and had the effect of integrating teachers into the data-driven culture of the school.

As a result of teacher involvement in these various induction activities, there was a varied effect on teacher satisfaction. Smith and Ingersoll (2004) have asserted that the more options for induction activities that are available to new teachers, the greater the

likelihood that they will feel supported and successful, but it is essential to think about the quality of the activities when judging teacher satisfaction. For veteran teachers, the induction of new teachers helps them to play an active role in the transition process, allowing them a role in transferring knowledge about school traditions and norms, while also preserving their own sets of interests (Ball, 1987; Schempp, Sparkes & Templin, 1993).

Mentoring to Guide Novice Teachers

As previously discussed, novice teachers in the study were participants in FIRST, the district-level induction program, followed by the school-level one-day orientation and the full-year mentoring program. The mentoring program was developed and structured at the school level, primarily by lead mentor Tara, with guidance and support from the district level. Just as induction programs are most successful when aligned to teacher needs and school goals, mentoring programs follow suit.

The multiple layers to the mentoring program at Smith were seen as both a benefit and a hindrance to teachers at Smith. Teachers benefitted from being paired with a direct mentor, usually on their grade-level, for the purpose of collaboration and support around instructional matters in the content area and grade they taught. The monthly mentoring meetings brought groups of new teachers together to address topics that pertained to their immediate areas of concern given the time of the school year or specific issues being faced by teachers. While some teachers like Rebecca viewed the mentoring program as a requirement to fill and "just took up time for the sake of taking up time", others thought that the activities were valuable and intended to meet their immediate needs as new teachers.

A central purpose of a mentoring program is to assist new teachers in making a successful entry into the profession by relying on the expertise of experienced teachers to provide real-world training and assistance (Martinez-Garcia & Slate, 2009), and the teachers at Smith described some ways that their mentors helped them. Karen talked about meeting with her mentor.

To do one-on-one and focus more so on what I need, or things that I have questions about and it's on our grade level. If I have questions about assessments that we're giving or field trips that we have coming up, it's nice to have that to talk about too. Dana also explained how helpful it was that her mentor called her periodically over the summer and let her know about things she should be getting and ways she could prepare for the new school year. Many of the initial induction and mentoring events revolved around procedural activities because those are usually the most immediate needs for novice teachers as they began the school year. Debbie shared that during mentor meetings, presentations took place to introduce teachers to curriculum documents on the website, show where certain instructional resources could be found in the school, and plan together for the first days of school. These actions taken by the mentors not only gave the beginning teachers useful tips, but also developed a sense of comfort and the knowledge that there was someone there to assist them when needed. For these reasons, teachers who had access to a mentoring relationship would develop competencies more quickly, be more satisfied, and be much less likely to leave teaching in the early years.

The past way of structuring the induction and mentoring programs was such that Tara was the designated lead for the school, and Debbie trusted her judgment and experience on several aspects of decision-making. Oddly enough, on other elements of the

program, such as mentor-mentee matching, Debbie took full ownership. Tara shared her perception that she has felt very isolated in her leadership over the mentoring program, but was optimistic about what the new program could mean for teachers at Smith.

I do feel like 99.9% of what is done with the mentoring program has just been me. I have not felt very much support. I feel that's changing some for next year, we are taking on what's called a collaborative mentoring approach and the whole county is doing. This is the second year that the county is embracing this and we're jumping on mainly now because the resources are available to us and we've been told that all the schools are going to be going to this anyhow. One of the requirements of the collaborative mentoring is that you have to have an administrative person at all of the meetings.

Tara's optimism was shared by Debbie with respect to the collaborative mentoring program. As Smith Elementary School made plans to transition in the next year to the collaborative mentoring program that was being promoted by the district, Debbie described how the lead mentor and assistant principal were starting to work together to implement this new program.

Identifying people who are in-house experts here and that if you're any teacher, if you begin to have an issue with a certain part of the curriculum, that it would be a go-to person to say, 'look, I'm teaching matter and this is what I tried and the kids just really did not seem to get it or they struggled with that part, do you have any suggestions?'

As Smith and Ingersoll (2004) and Youngs (2007) would point out, the level of training provided to mentors and the attention to match between the mentor and mentee are critical

markers of a successful mentoring program. The mentoring program at Smith was structured in a way that attended to those factors, but those decisions were primarily made by Debbie, with little collaboration or input from Tara, who truly knows the teachers and their mentoring strengths. However, Debbie gave the impression that in the collaborative model, there would in fact be a shared decision-making process related to mentor selection and types of activities that were used.

Mentors must be skilled at supporting and guiding new teachers, and they require training and support for their role in effectively guiding novice teachers (Evertson & Smithey, 2000; Honaker, 2004; Kardos et al., 2001; Feiman-Nemser, 2001). It was not entirely clear whether the mentors at Smith received any formalized training to guide and assist them in their important role.

The goal in a high-quality mentoring program would be to have mentors serve in a collaborative, supportive role, empowering beginning teachers to take their learning into their own hands and promote their individual growth by exerting their professional autonomy (Cherubini, 2007). By engaging teachers in ongoing and targeted efforts to improve their instructional practices, mentors can support the professional growth of novice teachers over the course of their first year. Novice teachers at Smith expressed that through their mentoring meetings, they learned about strategies that could carry them through varied situations and help them to think critically about their practices. Tara mentioned that teachers learned how to seek out needed resources and tried out several assessment strategies, while Isabelle recalled having discussions about student artifacts. These action-based learning activities were productive for teachers because they were

useful at the time, but they were also valuable for developing long-term practices that could promote successful teaching and learning.

Teachers who have experienced effective mentoring suggest that increasing mentoring support may have an impact on their desire to stay or leave a school (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Ingersoll, 2003a). Teachers at Smith Elementary School did not necessarily point to the mentoring or induction programs as reasons for them to remain in the profession, but it did appear that in general terms, the activities they engaged in were meaningful and consequential.

Collegiality

Collegiality is an important feature of a healthy school and one that signifies that positive micropolitics are likely occurring in that school. When seasoned and novice teachers work together for the betterment of their students and their school, a collegial environment is being fostered that can lead to effective teaching and learning (Kardos, et al., 2001). The element of collegiality, and its related sub-themes of teacher interactions, collaboration, and shared decision-making, is an essential element of my definition of micropolitics. It was important to understand how the presence or absence of collegiality could impact the school culture, the relationships within the school, and the decisions made by teachers and leaders at the school. Moreover, the illustrative representation of the micropolitics at Smith Elementary School, displayed in Figure 4, depicts collegiality as one of the balls that the principal is juggling. Because this ball was one of several that she was attempting to keep in the air, it was logical that one or a few balls would either be dropped or fumbled at some point. The following section of this chapter describes how

collegiality was enacted at Smith, and through teacher and principal accounts of their experiences, it became clear that this ball was being mishandled.

Teachers are best served in integrated professional cultures where there is sustained support and ongoing exchange across experience levels for all teachers. Furthermore, novice teachers seek cues from colleagues about how to interact in their new role as a teacher (Kardos et al., 2001), and their initial interactions with seasoned teachers have an effect on their ability to integrate and be effective as they enter the school community. As a component of school micropolitics, collegiality is a critical element of a high-functioning school environment, and indicative of shared leadership within the school. "Collegiality among teachers and between teachers and their principals has been advanced as one of the most fruitful strategies for fostering teacher development," (Hargreaves, 1991, p. 46). The case study at Smith Elementary School provided evidence of some degree of collegiality, however the central interactions that took place were developed by, and between, teachers, and not fostered by the school administrators.

As Angelle (2006) and Kardos et al. (2001) described in their research, some teachers may be socialized into ineffective schools, where negative experiences lead to frustration, burnout and an increased risk of attrition. Teachers may also enter an ineffective school environment and not only learn poor practices, but become part of a culture that perpetuates those habits. This creates a cycle of school leaders promoting faulty perspectives and practices, teachers engaging in similar behavior and thinking, and those teachers serving as mentors to novice teachers who will learn from a flawed system. While the situation at Smith was not as grave as that which was described by Angelle (2006) and Kardos et al. (2001), there was still a high level of dissatisfaction among novice

teachers due to the overall lack of collegiality. It was not only that ineffective practices and perspectives were being spread by the principal and certain teachers, but that the principal was not even making attempts to encourage constructive practices and interactions. Not only did this cycle of ineffectuality pose problems for teacher satisfaction and retention, but greater harm was done to the school culture, teacher morale, and overall student achievement.

Leaders who construct a vision and commit to creating a school culture that supports regular and sustained collaboration among teachers and groups will have teachers who are more effectual and can better meet the needs of their students (Kardos et al., 2001; Martinez-Garcia & Slate, 2009). This is especially important as new teachers come on board and are acculturated into the school and the existing norms. By building collegial relationships with their teachers and encouraging those relations within teacher groups, a principal can send a powerful message that there is a collective vision and all school community members are working toward shared success. These actions are hallmarks of a positive micropolitical environment. At Smith, beginning teachers had a strong sense that their principal did not desire or encourage collegiality, and this has had a detrimental effect on their levels of satisfaction, and on the micropolitics of the school as a whole.

Moreover, if the values of the organization are compatible with the values of the employee, the employee will likely have a positive attitude toward the workplace (Angelle, 2006). As described in the previous section of this chapter on academic instruction, teachers and principal had disparate views on educational philosophies and the ways to effectuate student learning. Because of these conflicting viewpoints, the micropolitical climate at Smith favored hierarchy and control rather than collegiality and collaboration.

The result for novice teachers was dissatisfaction with the school and the profession, which in other cases would often lead to attrition, but at Smith is not generally the case. For many beginning teachers, “the climate created by the principals will be a factor in their success or failure,” (Brock & Grady, 2000, p. 41).

Teacher-to-Teacher Interactions

As seen through the literature on the micropolitics of teacher-to-teacher interactions, and now in this case study, collegiality is an important element of a school's culture, and one that can have an impact on new teachers. Micropolitics are manifested in schools, often as a product of peer interaction and influence. The micropolitics of teacher relationships involve an understanding of the roles played by different members of the school culture, the messages sent between the members, and the strategies that can be used to gain influence among those members (Schempp et al., 1993). Some teachers also profit from learning from their colleagues' experiences and competence, leading to higher levels of collaboration, satisfaction, and professionalism for themselves (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002a). For the most part, novice teachers at Smith credited their more experienced colleagues with being welcoming, open, and helpful to them as they made the transition into their teaching career. Casey explained that the other teachers were very supportive and that it was optimal to seek assistance from a fellow teacher than from an administrator. Karen also shared that her grade-level colleagues were a form of professional and personal support as she went through some tough challenges in her first year.

A collegial relationship can develop as experienced teachers model and share effective practice with new teachers (Cherubini, 2007), often having the effect of developing a mutual exchange of ideas and resources between novice and veteran teachers.

This circular support system is an advantage to principals because it gives them additional assistance in guiding new teachers (Honaker, 2004) and broadens the scope of influence being offered to the novice teacher. There was even the sense that at Smith, veteran and novice teachers alike were “all in the same boat” and enduring the same challenges with data collection, assessments, student behavior, and time management. The camaraderie that developed between teacher pairs or groups helped many of the beginning teachers to see that they were not alone in their feelings of stress and frustration.

As Tara explained, positive interactions occurred between many teachers, but the interactions between teachers and principal were weak.

I think the culture between individual teachers is good and I think there's a lot of friendships that are made here. A lot of people go to others and rely on each other, but I think there's a lot of teachers who don't see eye-to-eye, and have different values in teaching, but I'm sure that's any building, so I don't think that's really odd.

Relations with administration are very difficult, because the line of communication is difficult at this school.

Tara's opinion further validated that the conflict between teachers and the principal were based on differences in their philosophical stances and this had an influence on the micropolitical state of the school.

For the most part, teachers explained that they took it upon themselves to seek out assistance from other teachers who they knew had the knowledge or resources they needed. In talking about the advice they would give other new teachers, teachers repeatedly said that they should be ready to ask lots of questions of their fellow teachers and take any help

that others offered. Rebecca described her perspective that it is on the teacher to figure out what they needed and to reach out to others:

You really need to know what you're looking for, like if you're struggling in a certain area, you need to be the one to figure it out and to be able to go to the proper people to help you. Just developing relationships with the grade level teachers you work with and the specialist for me has been the most helpful.

Nothing was just laid out on the table, like, 'here this is what you can do to help yourself'. You really needed to just be self-sufficient and just know where to go and create relationships to make you a better teacher.

Rebecca's point reiterated the notion that teachers were basically left to fend for themselves at Smith. By removing herself from the equation of teacher support, Debbie sent the message that teachers were responsible for their own learning and for obtaining the information that would help them succeed.

Researchers agree that beginning teachers benefit from opportunities to share concerns and ideas, as well as to ask questions of colleagues (Greenfield, 1991; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002b). On the other hand, just as Kelchtermans & Ballet (2002a) asserted, there were some teachers at Smith who were simply not interested in working together with new teachers, or any other teachers, for that matter, instead remaining disengaged and working in isolation in their own classrooms. Karen captured the notion of isolation, saying, "I feel so shut off from the whole world in here, because it's just you and your kids". The nature of teaching as an isolated profession seems paradoxical, as contact with colleagues may be fleeting, and can have a serious impact on the micropolitics between teachers and principals. Lieberman and Miller (1990) further described the

"power of classroom territoriality", in which teachers appear to have control in their classrooms but beyond those walls, they are able to exert little external power within the school context. The examples given by Rebecca and Karen simply violated the concept of collegiality.

Despite the plethora of research that demonstrates the importance of fostering a collegial and collaborative environment, the principal did not actively promote this type of interaction at Smith. Other than the routine staff and data meetings, Debbie did not purposefully and intentionally create experiences for teachers to collaborate on a regular basis. Collegiality is deemed a priority when the principal makes it a significant, both in the school's vision and by making time for collegial activities in the daily schedule and it did not appear that this was of high value at Smith.

There were also instances in which the differences between colleagues proved to be greater than their commonalities (Hargreaves, 1991, Woods, 1990). Novice teachers were matter of fact in explaining that there were many teachers within the school who did not know each other's names. In probing further about this phenomenon, I learned that there was a brief time when the principal introduced new staff members at the initial staff meeting of the year, and beyond that, if teachers were not situated in close proximity to one another within the building or teaching at the same grade level, it was likely that they would not cross paths. This was problematic because of the impact on school micropolitics and on the novice teachers' early experiences; the lack of personal and professional communication with their colleagues has certainly resulted in a degree of dissatisfaction. The nature of teaching as an isolated profession also seems paradoxical, as teachers interact regularly with students, but as was evidenced in some of the descriptions about life

at Smith Elementary, contact with colleagues were minimal in many cases, resulting in a negative effect on the micropolitics between teachers and principals.

Collaboration and Cooperation

Supportive learning environments should be comprised of teams of teachers and administrators working together for improved student learning. Administrators that build trust between themselves and staff members, tend to encourage collaboration and teacher development that demonstrates a shared responsibility for school success (Kardos et al., 2001; Youngs, 2007). As Brock and Grady (2000) reported, novice teachers desire contact and affirmation from their principal and they see their relationship with the principal as significant in their work life. Through both direct and indirect actions, such as providing time, space, and resources for teachers to work together, and by being responsive to teachers' changing needs, principals can signify to novice teachers that it is an important school goal to help them develop as professionals. Good schools are like good families in that they are characterized by a sense of belonging, continuity, and community (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Durkheim, 1961; Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Parsons, 1959; Rosenholtz, 1989).

While teachers would benefit from other forms of ongoing collaboration with a wider group of teachers, many activities of that nature were not built into the professional development structure at the school. In fact, there did not seem to be a distinct professional development strategy or plan at Smith Elementary School, and teachers were left to seek district opportunities or to wait until a schoolwide opportunity was presented at a staff meeting.

Similar to the teachers studied in Smith and Ingersoll's (2004) research, the new teachers at Smith all revealed that they had common planning time with other teachers at

their grade level. As discussed in another section of this chapter, the grade level meetings that were required of all teachers at Smith served as a form of contrived collegiality because, while important and valuable, teachers were not given a choice about attending these meetings. Debbie contended that the planning and data meetings could serve the purpose of preparing to meet the distinct needs of the students in a grade level.

You cannot have kids that are having problems get everything done by one person, it's too big of a job for one person. It has to be a team and it has to be a team where people can say, 'I need this' and that they'll trust the team to hear them and try and spend some of their efforts on meeting their needs, because ultimately you're meeting the children's needs.

Debbie's comments insinuated that she was an equal partner with teachers on their grade-level teams and collaborated with teachers for the good of their students. While brief and surface-level conversations to this effect were observed during the data meetings, there was no widespread evidence, either from observation or from teachers' accounts, that Debbie had collaborated with teachers on instructional matters. From the comments made by the teachers in the study, it was not clear to them that the weekly meetings at Smith were structured with such collaborative goals and intentions.

At Smith, one of the most referenced types of peer support was the mentoring program. The lead mentor and principal were optimistic about the effects of the collaborative mentoring program that would be implemented in the next year. Tara said, "I see it really lifting up the new teacher and making them not just feel like a new teacher, but a part of the school, so I feel more optimistic about next year". Debbie agreed with Tara's

sentiments, viewing the program as a way to provide mentoring to teachers at all stages of their career and to address specific teacher needs.

I'm hopeful that the reason that the county is moving toward collaborative mentoring is they've come to realize that you really need to provide novice teachers with more than one year of a mentor. There are times in every teacher's life when they need a mentor, for either a brief period of time or a certain topic or when there's a change in curriculum or a change in what they're teaching. That support is just real important and I think that's the reason we see so many people leave education in the first few years.

Because of the availability of district-level support and resources for this program, it seemed as though Debbie and the assistant principal did not see the impetus for the development of their own sustained and tailored professional development strategy at Smith Elementary School.

Teachers at Smith did not have the benefit of meeting informally in a peer group like a professional learning community that would allow for conversation and sharing about best practices and instructional challenges. Hargreaves (1991) describes some productive forms of collegiality such as team teaching, collaborative planning, peer coaching, mentor relationships, professional dialogue, and collaborative action research. Teachers would even profit from connecting on different levels, such as content expertise, to share ideas across grade levels. Bryk, Camburn, and Louis (1999) asserted that professional communities must have strategies in place for developing and maintaining productive norms and practices over time, paying particular attention to the induction of new members of the school community. These widely used professional learning models

were not used at Smith, and this put teachers at a disadvantage. Despite the reports of the positive effects of collegiality and supportive school culture, many schools are still promoting unproductive practices, infrequently offering good teachers opportunities or incentives to share their expertise with colleagues. Although teacher involvement in these types of collegial activities led to a reduced risk for leaving by about 43 percent (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004), beginning teachers are often left to fend for themselves without collegial support (NCTAF, 2007). As seen through the data collected in this case study, Smith was one of those schools that has not attended to the importance of a collegial and collaborative micropolitical environment.

The nature of schools and work in classrooms may present the picture that teachers have autonomy and can use discretion in their own classrooms, however there is an isolation that results from such a system that is more troubling to new teachers (Ingersoll, 2004a). Debbie furthered Ingersoll's point by saying:

Yeah, the networking piece and the collaborating is not...I find that I have a few people who aren't good at networking here. They really still are kind of holdovers from the days when teachers went into their rooms, shut the door and taught by themselves, so they don't have a choice about the collaborative meetings, but you can tell because they kind of hold back.

Debbie acknowledged that collaboration was not a strength of every teacher at the school, but she implied that the collaborative meetings would be the thing to change their practice, rather than taking the responsibility upon herself to encourage them to be collaborators in the school's success. While some veteran teachers are not interested in collaboration, it is the responsibility of the school leader to ensure that such activities are encouraged and

made available for the good of the staff and the betterment of the school. As collaboration increases, isolation decreases and teacher satisfaction will also likely increase (Honaker, 2004).

Teachers benefit from being involved in an external network of teachers and they also look to teacher leaders in their schools for guidance. Shared leadership is fostered through cooperation among teachers, and positive energy results from teachers offering recognition and sharing in the success of others (Greenfield, 1991). Karen talked about her desire to learn from teachers at other schools.

In the county, we know how first grade works here, but we don't know how first grade works at other schools. I have a friend that works second grade at a different school and I do more collaboration with her than I do here so I definitely think we would benefit from more of a collaborative setting.

By opening herself up to learning from, and cooperating with, other teachers at Smith and elsewhere, Karen demonstrated the idea that novice teachers were willing to further their professional growth in a variety of ways.

Just as novice teachers desire varied types of collaboration with their colleagues, administrators also seek out professional development experiences to learn and grow as leaders. Debbie shared her perspective on expanding her own professional knowledge by communicating with other principals.

I find that helpful. It's one of the reasons I like to go to the national conference because you can get in there and have some sharing and I'm very fortunate I've got a really good group of colleagues. I can pick up the phone and call them and periodically we get together informally and have those kinds of conversations and

there's just a lot of good information and sharing that comes out of those. If you're going to use my time to get together with a group of folks and if the educational leader standards are truly what you expect us to do, then let's spend our time on how we can be doing things and what types of things you can put in your tool bag that would be evidence of meeting those standards.

As a principal who recognized the importance of collaboration and collegial learning for herself, it is puzzling that Debbie did not readily promote similar activities among teachers at Smith.

Power-with and Shared Decision-making

The key characteristic of a collaborative model is that teachers are respected as leaders and principals serve as the leaders of leaders (Ash & Pearsall, 2000), facilitating activities that will improve the instructional work. As a result, positive micropolitical school change is interactive and participative rather than top-down or bottom-up. Many new teachers discover that through collaborative relationships with colleagues, they can learn from one another, further enhancing their individual role and their contribution to the school. The process of using leadership to shape the thinking and educational philosophy of others is a powerful tool for improving teaching and learning (Ash & Pearsall, 2000), and can be much more meaningful when led by teachers rather than administrators.

The comments made by the principals and teachers at Smith acknowledged that "power is exercised over teachers, but also through them, to the extent that they are motivated to pursue organizational goals," (Blase & Anderson, 1995, p. 104). Throughout the discussions with study participants, extensive references were made about the emphasis on data-driven practices and assessment techniques as a solid part of the school culture.

While it was clear that these were priorities for Debbie, there was little evidence that teachers were involved in communication and shared decision-making that helped them to understand the importance of these school goals. Debbie described the analogy of a “very fragile rubber dingy in the middle of a tumultuous ocean” as a symbol for school culture.

If a hole pops up in the dingy, you don't stand and argue about whose job it is to patch the hole. Everybody sees that this is my job and the others jump in to help, because if you don't you're all going to sink together. I look at the hole as being children who aren't learning and being successful. We're all going to take on the ship for the success of staying afloat and surviving and we're all going to help each other with that and it's not a matter of one person saying how you're going to do it, that it's going to be a group decision.

In her assessment of the micropolitical state at Smith, Debbie described a highly cooperative environment in which teachers were engaged in shared decision-making and constant teamwork for the betterment of their students. She talked a lot about the ways that she envisioned teachers at Smith using the data to collaborate with her and with one another to improve student achievement for individuals or small groups. She even discussed her vision for using a strength-based approach, where the “magical thing called fit” defined her hiring and placement decisions and gave teachers the ability to have influence at their grade level. She also described a high-level of engagement between teachers, and toward those goals, but the anecdotal evidence from several data meetings did not demonstrate teachers' investment and involvement in those professional activities.

Instead, teachers talked about the practical ways that collaboration with their grade level colleagues was an asset to them in building their own knowledge and skills and

wielding “power-with” others to reach a specified goal. Dana talked about teaming up with another teacher to tackle some student behavior issues. Alex talked about pulling on the strengths of others on her team, so that each one serves a specific role for the good of the grade level. The ability to problem-solve together helped these novice teachers to develop their own skills while also giving them confidence in the immediate situation.

In the same ways that teachers enhance student learning, principals should enhance teacher learning; but if teachers are unaware of the ways that the principal is encouraging their growth and their instructional knowledge, then these ideas and efforts are futile. Many beginning teachers do not know how they fit into the school community and how they can use their role to exercise power within groups of colleagues. Because of this unawareness of the school’s micropolitics, new teachers often sense a lack of collegiality, which in turn prevents them from trusting in other teachers and the principal (Rust, 1994). Beginning teachers can impact the context of a school in several small ways as they make an entrance and learn to navigate the micropolitics that are before them.

Furthermore, collaborative leadership models contend that there are many leadership possibilities within a school and leadership should not be role-specific and reserved only for administrators. It is the principal's job is to create learning opportunities for all teachers so they can develop into productive leaders and improve the overall school community. Debbie contended that over the past few years, she has encouraged several teachers to build up their strengths in leadership and further their individual careers in that direction and at other schools within the district.

Ingersoll (2004b) has found that in schools where teachers have more decision-making power, there is less conflict and less attrition. Tara talked about some of the

practices that she used in the mentoring program, such as asking teachers for input on topics of interest, which was a strategy that was also being used by the academic specialists at Smith as they were planning for the upcoming year. Other strategies were seen at Smith, such as the use of a decision-making chart to note pros and cons of specific initiatives, as well as the use of a box where each teacher was required to submit an anonymous suggestion for a professional development topic. While these are worthy ideas, the methods point to some inherent issues with the culture at Smith. If teachers would only make recommendations when required to, and if their comments were made private, there is a concern that their voices were not truly being welcomed or heard. It was obvious that teachers at Smith were not able to explore alternatives as a community of learners (Blase & Blase, 1999), but there was more of an appeal to their professional sensibilities that appeased teachers into thinking they had a voice (Ashby, 1996). Teachers contend that the level of decision-making influence they have over themselves and over school policies may impact their experience in ways that help them decide whether to stay or leave teaching (Ingersoll, 2003a; Ingersoll, 2004b).

Tara's description of the collaborative mentoring program pointed out that the goal of open communication and shared decision-making may be in Smith's future and that mentors could serve as teacher leaders collaborating with novice teachers with similar goals in mind. She also attested to the fact that the involvement of the assistant principal would help increase the importance of the program at the school. Blase and Roberts (1994) contended that these positive influence strategies, most often used by open and effective principals, should serve as the benchmark for positive micropolitics in schools. In order to develop an effective micropolitical environment, it is the human capital that matters; who

those people are and how they communicate and work toward the goals of the school are important factors in a school's success.

Interpersonal Relations

Just as collegiality is important in developing a micropolitical culture that fosters professional learning centered on shared values and goals, it is through the interpersonal relations among members of the school community that define everyday life at a school. Micropolitics can be defined in one way as "the immediate, ongoing, dynamic interaction between and among individuals which occurs at all levels of public education" (Eilertsen, Gustafson, & Salo, 2008). A micropolitical perspective portrays schools as mini-political systems, "nested in multi-level governmental structures that set authoritative parameters for the play of power at the site level" (Malen & Cochran, 2008, p. 149). Both principals and teachers routinely employ a range of strategies and tactics to achieve their goals and protect their interests (Blase & Blase, 2002). It is through their motivations, actions, and resulting effects that schools become micropolitical environments.

The interpersonal relations are seen as another one of the balls being juggled by the principal as she managed Smith Elementary School. Her attention to the needs and desires of staff members, both as it applied to their teacher-teacher interactions and as it applied directly to her own individual interactions with teachers, were integral pieces of the micropolitical environment. The sub-themes of interpersonal relations, such as trusting and open communication, physical presence of the principal, and boundaries, all had an important role to play in how all of the other balls remained in the air at Smith. In order to maintain the academic instruction, procedural events, and school hierarchy, interpersonal

relations were largely influential on the principal's decision-making processes and practices.

Person-oriented

For many individuals in the education profession, being a teacher is not only a career choice, but a personal decision that defines them throughout their daily life. As novice teachers enter the first stage of their career, they identify strongly with their reasons for becoming a teacher and the passions they have for the profession often drive them to succeed during challenging times. Debbie talked about how in her hiring decisions, she attempted to dig deeper with teacher candidates to find out about their true goals and desires for themselves as teachers. She looked at their level and type of preparation, as well as the recommendations they had from previous supervisors; Debbie asserted that by taking these things into consideration, she was better able to look at the person she may be hiring and see how well they fit within the culture and the needs of Smith Elementary School in particular. It is clear that preparation matters, as the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2007) found that hiring well-prepared teachers reduced first year attrition by 50 percent. Further, "an inordinate amount of their capital-both human and financial-is consumed by the constant process of hiring and replacing beginning teachers who leave before they have mastered the ability to create a successful learning culture for their students," (NCTAF, 2007, p. 2). Debbie also mentioned that the "grow your own" model was alive and well at Smith, and she felt that this approach was worthy in building a cadre of teachers who were acculturated at Smith and understood the vision, goals, and micropolitics of the staff and students.

Ingersoll (2004a) explained how principals can make choices that result in misplaced assignments, leading to dissatisfaction, frustration, and poor student effects, often made by principals who evaluate the overall needs of the school and determine the best course of action in terms of convenience, cost, and time, and not taking into the account the needs of the teacher. While Debbie did think strategically about the placement of teachers at Smith, the nature of the hiring cycle at the school could create problems that negatively impacted placement. As discussed in a later section of this chapter, late hiring could have an adverse effect on teachers' entrance into the school as Debbie may have been forced to fill positions with candidates that were not necessarily a good fit.

Once on staff at Smith, teachers were introduced to the practices of the school through the induction and mentoring programs that Tara was largely responsible for. Tara talked about the importance of being sensitive to the prior experiences and needs of teachers at Smith. While this presented a dilemma for her at times, Tara recognized the value of tailoring the mentoring program to meet the distinct needs of the individual teachers rather than using a "one model fits all" strategy. She described her own perspective on the novice teachers she has seen enter Smith.

They're open-minded, new teachers that come in and say, 'okay, I'd like to try that' and those that will experiment usually do better. Teachers that take advice with a grain of salt do well because I've seen some new teachers who think 'you cannot tell me anything, I've been to college' and they look at mentoring as like, 'oh, I have to go to a meeting' but those who are like, 'hey, that's a good idea' or 'I'm willing to try this'.

She also described some of the essential qualities of a mentor, such as patience, friendliness, approachability, and a passion for teaching, as well as seeing the importance of working with new teachers.

Trusting and Open Communication

Authentic communication appears to be critical in fostering positive relations between teachers and their principal. In research done by Blase & Anderson (1995), teachers asserted that authenticity and trust are two important traits of principals; they also respected principals who modeled optimism, consideration, and honesty. In terms of having direct communication with the principal herself, teachers expressed that it was difficult to approach Debbie and that when issues arose, they would be more inclined to seek out a fellow teacher, their mentor, or even the assistant principal. Debbie, on the other hand, asserted that she made an effort to get to know teachers on enough of a personal level so that they would be at ease if they wanted to ask for advice or make a suggestion. Debbie did encourage teachers to call her by her first name, and most teachers did so, while some were hesitant and continued to treat the relationship more formally, calling her Mrs. Franklin.

I've got some people that are comfortable with doing that and I've got other people that they just cannot bring themselves to do that. If you're team members, you don't need to be that formal. I mean, obviously if we're walking down the hall and the kids are there, I don't call them by their first name. But to just try and create more of a level of comfort where they feel like they can bring something up or ask a question or make a suggestion. I've got a teacher that has been here since I arrived, she's an older teacher, and she still refers to me as Mrs. Franklin.

This formality between teacher and principal is indicative of the hierarchy that was felt by some teachers. Novice teachers at Smith often experienced cordial, ceremonial exchanges that tended to affirm the power of the principal (Malen & Cochran, 2008). Despite her half-hearted efforts to encourage a more open relationship with teachers, the sense of boundaries still remain.

As Debbie talked about her perspective on interacting with teachers, she recalled one teacher:

Even though I have dropped in on her, I don't think she's ever going to be comfortable with that. She just doesn't see, in her mindset, that's going to happen. I think there are other people that are perfectly comfortable with coming down here and saying that's not going to work and this and that and I think we need to do this, so it again just depends, it's a personality thing.

Teachers had similar reactions when asked to talk about how easy it was to approach their principal. Casey mentioned that:

Speaking on personality, and I'm finding out still, she could be in a perfect mood for a day and stuff, but just for her type of personality, we call her emotionless look, because she usually always has the same look on her face, she could be totally happy and everything, that look makes you think she's mad about something, when she's not. It kind of all depends on the day, if you catch her on a good day, then everything's fine but other days it's like she cannot be bothered with certain things.

Others chimed in, making references to the fact that she may have come from a military family and Karen said, "maybe that's how she grew up and her parents were in the military

and she just doesn't seem to open up at all, she seems very tight-knit and very reserved and that just might be how she is". Alex even spoke up to say:

You know, I'll be honest on this, I avoid Debbie as much as possible so like today it seemed like she was in a real bad mood and I have something I need to ask her, but it's not going to happen, not today, so I avoid her.

Alex's avoidance of the principal showed the strained interpersonal relations at the school. Dana recounted her own thoughts on the personality issue, stating:

I haven't experienced it personally, but I've heard many other people say the same thing that she said, which kind of made me step back a little bit that they always ask, well what kind of mood is she in today?

As novice teachers, Dana and others felt a sense of wariness about their communications with the principal.

Teachers in the study outwardly expressed their discomfort in their dealings with the principal. During the focus group, a situation occurred in which two novice teachers saw Debbie walk by the room where we were meeting, and they expressed that they were nervous that she could be listening in to our discussion. They also shared that Debbie will change her demeanor depending on the audience and the purpose of a meeting or interaction, often times acting more friendly or open when district staff or other visitors were present. Teachers were quick to recognize this lack of authenticity and were not impressed that her communication style exposed her partial treatment of people. One new teacher described the difference between staff at the school saying:

There are some teachers in the building that are fairly close to her and are ones that, even though I hate to say it, can get away with a lot more than others of us would be able to if we did the same type of thing.

This description displayed the perception that novice teachers and others may have had about the micropolitics that existed at Smith; favoritism and hierarchy within teachers and groups had a negative effect on the school's culture.

Despite the fact that teachers favored principals who created a safe environment in which teachers could speak openly (Blase and Anderson, 1995), the micropolitical environment at Smith did not openly foster such interactions. By regularly talking with teachers, a principal can promote reflection, make suggestions, or offer feedback and praise. As discussed in the section academic instruction, Debbie did not appear to make these elements of instructional leadership part of her repertoire. Leaders who enact these behaviors in constructive ways, and in a clear and timely manner, will be more likely to take the teachers' personal and professional needs into consideration, demonstrating to teachers that they promote a collaborative approach to leadership (Blase & Anderson, 1995).

Although an open line of communication and interpersonal relations did not necessarily flow between principal and teachers, there was a relatively open relationship between teachers at Smith. Tara characterized the mentor-mentee relationship and the different communication styles that evolved from those partnerships. She structured the program in a way that can foster active collaboration and communication that served as a push toward professional learning and growth for both teachers, but especially for the novice. Through regularly scheduled individual and group meetings, mentors and mentees

were able to engage in quality conversations about their practices and a comfort level could develop in which questions and concerns could easily be brought into the open. She summarized the purpose of this relationship, stating, “You know, you want to be a friend, but we're trying to grow them as a professional, as an, as an educator”. Teachers also agreed that their mentors were not only helpful and a strong support system for them in their first year, but that the open lines of communication helped them to become comfortable voicing their concerns and working through their problems.

Physical Presence of the Principal

The lack of physical presence on the part of the principal signifies something important to others in the school. As part of the micropolitical and hierarchical nature of the school environment, principal actions, or lack thereof, are seen as power plays (Webb, 2008). In many of the conversations with novice teachers, they expressed that Debbie was not seen in the classrooms and throughout the school building as much as they would expect or desire. They recalled routine sightings during key points during the day, such as arrival and dismissal, but overall, she did not have a visible presence in the school. They characterized many of the observances as related to student discipline or routine monitoring of the school building, and in some cases, teachers gave her some leeway for not being present in the school due to testing demands or other administrative duties that they believed she was busy with. Also disconcerting were the references by teachers that students could not identify the principal by name or sight and that her primary interactions with individual students tended to be negative ones. Tara even explained that Debbie showed minimal involvement in the new teacher orientation day at Smith, making herself seen to new teachers only for a brief introduction.

As addressed in a previous section in this chapter, teachers appeared to favor principals who demonstrated leadership and engagement in instructional activities. By making their presence felt throughout the school building, principals could influence the micropolitical organization in constructive or non-productive ways (Blase & Blase, 1999). Novice teachers at Smith Elementary School expressed that during the school day, they frequently saw Debbie throughout the school, but they asserted that the interactions were more superficial than meaningful for them and for their students. Debbie made her presence felt throughout the hallways by regularly walking around and checking in with teachers who were testing. She also popped in to have informal conversations with teachers during their planning periods. In one instance, Debbie was observed in the doorway of the teacher's lounge with a cup of coffee in hand and chatting with a few teachers, talking about kids and babies.

Dana talked about a time when a visiting principal came to Smith and spent time in classrooms engaging with students. Dana thought this was unusual since she had never seen Debbie interact with her students in such an informal way, but she also blamed Debbie's lack of involvement on the fact that she is busy. Other teachers characterized Debbie's classroom visits as brief observations and there was also the perception that if the principal stopped by your classroom that she is checking up on you or "making sure we're doing our job right", as Dana explained. Casey mentioned that "when she comes in here with students and stuff a lot of times it's for discipline reasons", while Dana simply stated that "everybody's looking afraid" when the principal enters the classroom. Casey recalled that Debbie's visits were more frequent during the beginning of the school year, and that the lack of visits to the classroom meant that things were going well and he was no longer

being monitored. The frequency and purpose of classroom visits once again signified Debbie's priorities; management tasks were valued over instructional tasks and monitoring of teachers and students was procedural rather than growth-producing. Debbie described her daily routines, explaining how she moved through the building first thing in the morning.

I make the rounds in the hall, go in the cafeteria and the foyer and down the halls in case someone's got some sort of situation that I need to address. Then I'll just go in and walk through the classrooms and I think that the kids and the teachers have gotten used to seeing me and know that I'm just walking, so I tell them I'm escaping from the office.

The hierarchical relations promoted through these superficial interactions created a micropolitical environment that did not readily foster positive feelings among teachers.

Debbie also expressed the purpose of her walkthroughs as conveying a message to students and teachers about what was expected to be happening in their classrooms.

Normally I try and do a walk down the hallway on the bottom floor then a walk back on the upper floor and then check the trailers. If the kids see you out walking around at the beginning of the day and you can kind of set the tone for the day. If there's a sub I try and walk in the room, be sure the kids know that they need to be on task, tell the sub if they have any problems to be sure and let us know. In some rooms when you know you have students that can give subs a run for their money, be sure that they see your, I call it your be good eye.

As described in these comments, Debbie attempted to manage the routines of the school through exertion of power and control; by alerting teachers and students to her presence, she engaged in an ongoing delineation of roles.

Debbie also talked about making attempts to connect with teachers during non-instructional time with the intention of building rapport and demonstrating that she was open and available for their questions or concerns.

I try to, particularly when people are new to the building, on work days or after school, just to kind of casually drop by, ask how things are going. I try to create opportunities that if somebody wants to have a conversation they would be able to and not feel like I've got to be very serious and formal and all of that, but just create opportunities for people to bring things up and create a social, not social in the terms of friend-friend, but a comfort level there where they would feel comfortable bringing things up.

Although Debbie acknowledged that she made attempts to engage with teachers on a more personal level, the teachers' did not perceive their relations to be as open or friendly as she characterized them to be. Throughout the observations, there was also the sense that an "open door" policy existed at Smith; over several visits to the school, a few teachers came in and out of the office to ask routine questions and Debbie quickly engaged with them to respond to their needs. On the contrary, Isabelle explained, "She's pretty busy, she's usually not in her office, or the door's closed". While her intentions were good, it appeared that Debbie's visits were intimidating to teachers and gave them the impression that they were being checked up on. Through an active physical presence and responsiveness in the school building, principals demonstrated that they were willing to use their authority for

productive purposes and in ways that would benefit teachers and students. Alternatively, the impractical use of principal authority can negatively impact teachers and students by creating tension between individuals and groups and altering the school culture.

Informal Evaluation

Informal evaluation can serve as one method for teachers and principals to interact in meaningful ways and on a regular basis. Kelchtermans (1993) contended that beginning teachers often believe that their professional competencies are evaluated only on a limited and partial basis. Based on the case study at Smith Elementary School, it appeared that novice teachers expected to be evaluated in formal and informal ways, but that they did not often feel they were provided with adequate feedback.

Teachers talked about the brief and informal observations that Debbie conducted as part of the district evaluation, the PPP, saying that they happen about 8 to 10 times per year. Karen mentioned that Debbie may come in at any time and sit down to watch the lesson or to look at her plan book. Casey explained that he tried to involve Debbie in the lesson when she would visit his classroom. Alex spoke about her lack of concern about these evaluations, saying “They're supposed to come in and observe for a few minutes and I don't mind. It's part of the job, it's no big deal, it used to be when I was younger because I did not have that self-confidence”. Teachers expressed that they would generally only receive feedback about their teaching after a formal observation, and that those informal walkthroughs did not serve a meaningful professional purpose for them.

Debbie spoke about her instructional walkthroughs as different from the informal walks through the school for the purpose of building management.

I try and pick grade levels that I'm going to do, at least one grade level that I'm going to go in for at least five minutes for quick walkthroughs. We've got a system called teachscape where you can be looking for different instructional strategies. She described the purpose of teachscape, saying that as she visited classrooms, she could collect data that would be compiled to create a holistic picture of what was happening across the school.

You don't collect the data by teachers, but there are different things you can, look at, like what types of strategies the teachers are using, what is the task that the kids have, how highly engaged are the students, what type of questioning is being used. There's a variety of things that I want to see one that the kids are engaged in the classroom.

Debbie also explained that in her walkthroughs and observations, she intended to find out if students understood the lesson's objective and she found that in most cases, students were successful in telling her what they are learning. She also expected to see an alignment between the curriculum and the teacher's instruction and to see students who were actively engaged in learning. There was sufficient evidence that Debbie engaged in purposeful classroom observations, but it was clear that she did not offer meaningful professional advice for teachers after those observations. Without this specific information about their instructional performance, novice teachers were often left to wonder how well they were progressing in their teaching practices.

Boundaries

Throughout their daily interactions, principals and teachers engage in cordial, ceremonial exchanges that tend to affirm the power of the principal (Malen & Cochran,

2008). As a result, new teachers tend to function within the boundaries set by principals. When teachers enter an unfamiliar school setting, they look to others for cues about the principal's preferences and they begin to understand the roles of various players in that context (Malen & Cochran, 2008).

Teachers at Smith provided several examples of interactions they had with their principal and for the most part, those interactions tended to be restrictive. The group of novice teachers in this study mentioned several strategies they used to manage their interactions with Debbie. Some teachers talked about reading her moods before approaching her, being cautious about talking to her about personal or professional matters, or even avoiding her altogether. Alex even said, "If they [administrators] need to see me, they can come in and talk to me, but I'm not one of those who are constantly in the office and chit-chatting with the higher ups". Teachers attributed their uneasiness about these interpersonal relationships to Debbie's specific personality traits or to her upbringing, and even on the fact that she is busy.

On the other hand, Debbie expressed that she is open to developing positive relations with her teachers, but sensed that some are simply not comfortable around her. Regardless of the reason for the strained relations, teachers made it clear that firm boundaries are set up between teachers and the principal.

Teachers utilize an instrumental aspect of micropolitical literacy to engage a repertoire of strategies and tactics to achieve their own goals within schools (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002b). In order to effectively manage their communications with the principal, teachers developed this operational definition of micropolitics as a way to establish, protect, and restore desirable working conditions for themselves within the

unique context of Smith Elementary School. Because the success of novice teachers, and ultimately the success of a school, depended on how well the players at the school could communicate and collaborate toward common goals, it was important that barriers were not in place that prevented this communication from happening. Administrators that build trust between themselves and staff members, tend to encourage collaboration and teacher development that demonstrates a shared responsibility for school success (Kardos et al., 2001; Youngs, 2007).

As Brock and Grady (2000) reported, new teachers desire interaction and affirmation from their principals and there is a resulting effect on the school climate. Most teachers, and especially novice teachers, are interested in learning about their role and being an active participant in the school, if given the opportunity. Mullen and Jones (2008) agreed that teachers who feel respected and supported will be more likely to engage in productive interactions with their colleagues and the principal. Alternatively, as Rust (1994) discussed, an unawareness of the realities of interpersonal relations can lead teachers to misperceptions about the school culture, which in turn can prevent them from trusting in other teachers and the principal. Principals like Debbie have the power to positively influence the experiences of new teachers by ensuring that their direct and indirect actions and communication with teachers are well received.

In terms of boundaries that are set up to define relationships between teachers at Smith, there was a general sense that novice teachers were more comfortable working with one another, and that they learned how to use those collegial relations to their advantage. Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002a) described the case that some teachers are not interested in working together, but rather remained disengaged and stayed in their own classrooms, and

there were examples of teachers who fit that profile at Smith. In addition, Hargreaves (1991) and Woods (1990) contended that the differences between colleagues may at times have been greater than their commonalities, which had a resulting effect on relationships and culture as a whole. Examples of this were seen at Smith, both in the divisions between grade-levels and in the proximity of teachers to one another. Teachers described how the positioning of teachers' classrooms in the school building or trailers largely influenced their ability to work together. Casey said:

If you have any teammates that are in trailers sometimes the collaboration even gets more intensified. Personally speaking, when there's tornado watches and warnings and you wind up with forty-eight students with two teachers in the classroom, so me and one of the other second grade teachers tend to plan quite a bit together, so then if something like that happens, then we can continue instruction.

Clearly, teachers need to adapt to the school environment and Casey's anecdote served as one example of the way that teachers acclimated to the micropolitical conditions of the school.

Beginning teachers at Smith realized that they needed information and resources from their colleagues and many figured out ways to navigate these relationships in ways that would help them be successful. For example, Dana talked about her strategy of waiting until she was ready to walk out the door in the afternoon before she would ask a question of another teacher, so that she was able to control the time spent in conversation. Alex also discussed several examples of how she pulled on the strengths of her teammates in order to improve her own practices. It appeared that these teachers quickly became aware of their role in the school and recognized the boundaries of these relationships. By

simply recognizing how these interactions functioned and knowing how to exercise their individual power within the confines of the school culture, these beginning teachers took the first step toward controlling their success.

Because social power is a part of the daily functioning and long-term acceptance in a school, new teachers should be cognizant of their place and the place of others within the school system. Just as veteran teachers have a certain level of status and influence over the thoughts and actions of their colleagues, novice teachers also enter the school culture and inevitably change the dynamics at play (Schempp, Sparkes & Templin, 1993).

Backstage Behaviors

Rust (1994) introduced the term "backstage behaviors" of teaching, which relates to the balance of myriad daily demands, classroom management, the planning needed to make learning possible, and the networking required to develop support systems for survival in schools. I would assert that principals also engage in backstage behaviors to meet their daily responsibilities, ensuring that teaching and learning is happening in classrooms and exercising management over the functional aspects of the school.

Debbie spoke about hiring practices at Smith and indicated that she took a very direct and intentional approach in selecting teachers who would best fit the school and the grade levels where they were assigned. She referred to using the strengths approach for recognizing teachers' experiences and abilities, matching teachers to positions and teams where they could best use their skills to achieve the goals of student success. She also referred to the fact that she purposely mixed novice teachers with those who had an institutional history at Smith so that there was a balance in contextual knowledge. Debbie's strategy for selection and hiring is counterintuitive to the approaches typically seen in

schools. As Darling-Hammond and Berry (1999) contended, "Recruitment of teachers is often ad hoc. Teacher preparation is uneven and often insufficiently aligned with the needs of contemporary classrooms and diverse learners. Selection and hiring decisions are too often disconnected from either specific school district goals or from a conception of quality teaching," (p.255). By using a systematic and thoughtful approach to hiring, Debbie took the first step in setting novice teachers up for success in the micropolitical environment at Smith.

While teachers were aware of the strengths approach because of their involvement in a staff development activity related to the book, Teach With Your Strengths, they were largely unaware of the intentional decisions made by Debbie. Galbraith's (1983) notion of normative power, and the subtle conditioning that makes people believe that "what is" is the way it "should" be, is influential here because the principal made strategic decisions that had a definitive impact on the school culture, but teachers did not know the extent of time and effort that has gone into those decisions.

As another example of a backstage behavior enacted by the principal, the acquisition of resources was a regular activity for Debbie. Teachers and the principal also acknowledged that material resources were plentiful at Smith Elementary School and teachers were not wanting for the instructional tools needed to do their jobs. Alex stated:

I believe that she has our back. I think she does a lot behind closed doors, that we're really not aware of. She tries so hard, like I know we're getting new classrooms, new playground and we got some used computers.

Tara also described some of the "goodies" that were provided by the principal, using school funds, to welcome new teachers. As important as material and instructional

resources are, this type of backstage behavior often goes unnoticed by teachers, simply because they expect that they should have these items available to them, and because they tend to focus more on the direct interactions and front stage behaviors that are happening.

Teachers also discussed some instances in which Debbie looked out for them, or “has their back”, as Dana explained; by sending them home when they are ill to providing them with snacks for a meeting, she exhibited small behaviors that showed support and understanding of the teachers’ experience. On the other hand, Karen expressed an opposing perspective that she did not feel supported by her administrators when she was enduring an extended and challenging conflict with a parent. As Blase and Anderson (1995) contended, “power in organizations is seldom exercised in overt, observable ways...power is more commonly embedded in the work process itself,” (p. 138). Furthermore, many micropolitical interactions are “submerged, quiet, unstated, and even unnoticed” (Marshall, 1991, p. 143); these examples of micropolitical behavior are often seen as part of the normal routine of schools and part of the expected hierarchical relations.

School Hierarchy

Schools are mini-political systems with site-based authoritative parameters, in which individuals and groups exert power in various ways to help them reach their personal and professional goals. Eilertsen, Gustafson, and Salo (2008) describe micropolitics as “the immediate, ongoing, dynamic interaction between and among individuals which occurs at all levels of public education,” (p. 295-6). Novice teachers at all schools must learn about, and find their place, within the hierarchy and school micropolitics, by adapting to the social and cultural norms.

The power differential between teachers and administrators, often displayed through the school hierarchy, was a critical element of the micropolitical environment at Smith Elementary School. Because a formal and informal hierarchy existed at the school, and the site actors worked in direct and indirect ways to maintain those hierarchies, there was a resulting impact on novice teachers. As depicted in the visual representation of the micropolitical environment at Smith in Figure 4, the school hierarchy was another one of the balls being juggled by the principal. In her attempts to preserve the traditional hierarchical relations and power differentials, other balls, such as collegiality or academic instruction, were being mishandled.

Blase (1991) discussed how cooperation and conflict between individuals at different levels of the school hierarchy can define relationships and events within a school. At Smith Elementary School, teachers felt a sense of conflict between their personal goals and the principal's goals; alternatively, these teachers perceived a cooperative spirit among their co-workers. This inconsistency in micropolitical activity had an impact on teachers as they went about the work of teaching and learning. On the one hand, in the school hierarchy that existed, the principal exhibited top-down leadership and teachers responded with deference to authority. On the other hand, teachers had an investment in the student outcomes in their own classrooms, and sought opportunities to engage with like-minded colleagues. Many new teachers discovered that through collaborative relationships with colleagues, they could learn from one another, further enhancing their individual role and their contribution to the school. These conflicting ideologies presented novice teachers with a challenge as they decided how to best navigate the political environment at Smith. As teachers use political strategies to mediate their philosophical and professional

differences, they must identify which ideas and members are accepted as part of their community and develop a shared understanding of how to be productive in their schools (Achinstein, 2002).

Top-down Decision-making

Schools are organized in order to foster a hierarchy where the principal exerts top-down power regarding most major decisions and events that affect teachers, students, and families. For the most part, teachers deferred to Debbie's authority and accepted her decisions without direct questioning or inquiry; they did, however, express their consternation within their teacher groups and friendships. Mary characterized her perspective in this way, "There's not a lot of 'what would you like' or 'how would you go about doing this' or 'what would you like to do something', you know, it's, it's more like you're just going to be told to do something". Some teachers remain silent, holding back their opinions over concerns that they may create controversy or may jeopardize their role or potential success in the school (Schempp, Sparkes & Templin, 1993).

When teachers are given some degree of decision-making power, it is likely provided within specified parameters and with a set of predetermined outcomes in mind. Teachers at Smith gave no examples of ways in which they were able to influence school decisions in a meaningful way. While committee meetings and decision-making posters served as examples that teacher input was not null at Smith, those forms of participative decision-making were not enough to make teachers feel as if their voice was welcomed and heard. Decisions that directly impacted teachers and their work, such as selection of grade-level leaders and the movement of teachers from one grade level to another, were

principally made by the administrators without seeking input from the teachers who would be affected by the decisions.

As several researchers have contended, leaders prioritize events and interactions in their schools, in such ways as information flow, goal-setting, hiring practices, personnel evaluations, professional development activities, teacher collaboration, mentoring arrangements, and induction programs (Ingersoll, 2003b; Malen & Cochran, 2008; Rosenholtz, 1989; Sergiovanni, 1982). As discussed in other sections of this chapter, each of these activities can chiefly influence a novice teacher's impression of life in their new school and whether that experience is positive or negative, and can result in their short-term and long-term contentment at the school and in the career. For seasoned teachers, it is important for them to have a voice in these types of activities so that the teachers' perspective reverberates through the decisions and policies that are enacted at the school. At Smith, both veteran and novice teachers claimed that their involvement in site-based decision-making was limited and not particularly welcomed. The few forms of participative decision-making that were evidenced include data meetings and committee meetings, both of which served as examples of contrived collegiality, which will be discussed in detail in a later section of this chapter.

Despite the fact that the autonomy and shared decision-making that are preferred in more collaborative models of leadership tend to better meet the needs of teachers than the traditional top-down models of school management, this model is not wholly embraced at Smith Elementary School (Learning First Alliance, 2005). In terms of the selection of curricular programs and instructional initiatives, teachers were also left out of the

discussion and decision-making process. Tara expressed her frustration with the way decisions were made and communicated to teacher groups at Smith.

Debbie happened to come in during our collaborative mentoring meeting that we had the other week and she was saying something about something we're doing next year where one day or one of our staff meetings every month is going to be devoted to this and we're all going through this program. Inside I'm thinking, 'well, why aren't we hearing about that as a whole staff right now?' She mentioned it, because we were talking about planning staff meetings for next year, but to me that's something I kind of want to know about and what exactly this is and right now it just sounds kind of like something we have to do, I haven't seen how is this going to help me in my class.

Tara expressed her concern about the way Debbie presented this seemingly important information to a small group of staff members; she felt that all teachers should be privy to this information. Tara became annoyed with this situation because Debbie sometimes shared things with certain people or in limited ways in order to maintain the power differential between herself and teachers, and even between teacher groups.

Other teachers repeatedly stated that curricular programs were introduced to them with little warning and without consideration for the effect such decisions would have on them and their students. Tara also contested that when teachers have brought comments and suggestions forward, they are often shot down.

I do feel there's a lot of areas that have been brought to her [Debbie's] attention that could be improved upon. Maybe that's just a different philosophy, to me when I see an area I need to work on, I'm going to work on it and I'm going to make that my

challenge. She has verbally said to teachers, 'I am who I am and I'm not going to change, either you fit here or you don't and if you don't fit here. I'll help you get your transfer.' That really hurts a lot of teachers because it bothers me to hear that and I've had teachers that come and tell me that that bothers them. It's like I don't even feel validated or when you have a concern about something, you don't feel that there's an open door policy.

As the lead mentor and a teacher who has been at Smith for several years, Tara had several opportunities on which to base her opinions about Debbie's decision-making strategies. Through these comments, it appeared that the top-down method of leadership was prevalent in Debbie's tenure at Smith, and she saw no need and had no desire to change. Isabelle summarized her depiction of Debbie in the following way:

I don't mean anything bad by this, but it's definitely my way or the highway, that's the best way I could characterize it from my perspective, it's just my perspective.

This characterization of Debbie demonstrated that there was certainly a pecking order within the micropolitics at Smith. For many novice teachers, it was better to remain quiet and compliant than to disrupt the status quo. As a result of the micropolitical and hierarchical nature of the school environment, a binary relationship between authority and influence is often enacted within schools (Webb, 2008), in which principals generally hold the most power.

Tara expressed her conflicting emotions about her role as a veteran teacher and lead mentor, in that she did not feel her own or other teachers' opinions were welcomed, but she did think that she had a certain degree of autonomy with the development of the mentoring program.

I have worked under various principals and I will be honest, Debbie's the hardest one I've ever had to work under. I've had principals where it's an open door policy and you can go and say, 'hey, I noticed this at dismissal time or I noticed this' and they will respond 'good, thanks for noticing' and something's done, not just shut down. It's just her personality, I do feel like 99.9% of what is done with the mentoring program has just been me, I have not felt very much support, but I feel that's changing some for next year, we are taking on what's called a collaborative mentoring approach and the whole county is doing this.

As previously discussed, Tara also asserted that she did not hold any higher degree of decision-making power when it comes to selecting and matching mentors. Most likely due to the fact that things had always been done this way at Smith, Tara did not see it as her role to be involved in the mentor selection process. Some of the novice teachers mentioned that their voice could be heard through the filter of the union representative at the school. Casey explained that even this method was not always successful at effecting change.

One of the union reps that we have in the school is very vocal, so if we tell them about things and, I know from experience, they do take things back to the union to try to get things changed. Not necessarily always with administration in our building is our voice heard, although it is often, but going beyond that, our voice is often heard.

These indirect methods for communicating important messages between teachers and the principal displayed that Debbie was not entirely interested in soliciting feedback from teachers in order to make changes to the micropolitics of the school. Because teachers at Smith were often limited in their opportunities for participatory decision-making, they generally contended that the level influence they had over themselves and over school policies, researchers would claim that these experiences would help them decide whether to stay or leave teaching (Blase, 1989; Ingersoll, 2003a; Ingersoll, 2004b). Ingersoll (2004b) has also found that in schools where teachers have more decision-making power, there is less conflict and less attrition.

Power-over and Authority

The micropolitical nature of schools can be manifested through the manipulation and control of teachers through a range of direct, overt, and blatant strategies, as well as indirect and subtle strategies (Blase & Blase, 2002). Malen and Cochran's (2008) notion is that authoritative parameters and power structures are at work in schools, and those power differentials have effects on teachers through their designated responsibilities, the distribution of resources, and the various policies that are enacted upon them. In thinking about Debbie's leadership style, most teachers expressed the perspective that she was authoritative and commanding in her approach. Karen described Debbie's style:

I would say her leadership style is that she cares about our interests, however, she comes across as very authoritative, where she internalizes herself, so she comes across very tight, not expressive. I think she makes a great leader, I think she's a strong person, but I think that to be a great leader, the people that you are leading,

you have to be more on their side. I don't necessarily feel like she is on our side, I feel like she gives that persona that she's up here and we're down here.

From the standpoint of a novice teacher, this view holds meaning because it provides evidence that the principal's demeanor had a large role to play in the experience of teachers at Smith. Blase and Anderson (1995) contended that "most principals are oriented towards control of teachers, although the strategies they use to achieve such control range from openly directive and authoritarian to diplomatic and subtle," (p.11).

As described in the section on interpersonal relations, teachers and administrators often engage in cordial exchanges that keep principals in a position of authority (Male & Cochran, 2008; Webb, 2008). Debbie rarely visited classrooms for positive reasons, and often engaged with teachers and students with a direct purpose such as disciplining a student or relating a message. Discipline seemed to be an important priority for Debbie as she mentioned the increase in discipline referrals at one of the staff meetings. She mentioned that as she walked down the hallways, she saw "stressed teachers yelling at students, which is a behavior that students pick up on and doesn't help anyone". She strongly reminded teachers about the nature of their interactions with students and how they needed to be modeling best practice, and that she would talk to teachers on an individual basis if she continued to see this. While this message was an important one, teachers were not given any opportunity to engage in discussion about the causes and effects of this observed behavior. Some teachers recognize the potential costs and consequences of taking on the principal and instead comply with the principal's preferences (Malen & Cochran, 2008). Particularly as a new teacher, they often function within the boundaries set by principals.

Teachers felt the pull of having little control over decisions that directly impact their classrooms, but having the responsibility of producing student outcomes in their classrooms. The "power of classroom territoriality", termed by Lieberman and Miller (1990) described the appearance that teachers have control in their classrooms but beyond those walls, they are able to exert little external power within the school context. Alex explained, saying:

I do make my own priorities everyday and one of these days it's going to catch up to me, and I know Debbie's going to come in my room and she's going to look in my Baldrige binder and [see it's incomplete]. I cannot do it all.

The conflict expressed by Alex signified her acknowledgement that sacrifices needed to be made in order to balance the expectations of the principal with the reality of the classroom.

On the other hand, Debbie did take overall responsibility for the student achievement at Smith, recognizing that as the leader in the school's hierarchy, she was ultimately accountable for teacher and student success.

I tell them, no one here is going to lose their job, because you've done your job and you've shown that you follow the kids. You've shown that you've responded to them and you've documented it. If anybody comes in here, we will explain this is what we've done, we've been responsive, we haven't just sat back and let things slide and we've used scientifically based educational research to select different strategies and we've documented that. So I think sometimes they get that way [fearful of losing their jobs], they really do, and I've told them the only person that they'll replace to start off with is me.

This is an important point that Debbie made about her willingness to be accountable for the overall success of teachers and students at Smith. It is unfortunate that she mentioned it in the interview, but did not make this opinion widely known among the school staff. As mentioned in the section on academic instruction, teachers felt a heavy burden to individually live up to high assessment standards at all costs.

While there may be opportunities for influence over school policies, priorities, and practices, novice teachers' roles are largely dependent on the level of involvement permitted or encouraged by the principal. Some teachers remain silent, holding back their opinions over concerns that they may create controversy or may jeopardize their role or potential success in the school (Schempp, Sparkes & Templin, 1993). Teachers expressed that parent-teacher interactions were made challenging when Debbie did not adequately support them or their interests. Casey explained:

If it comes to a meeting with her and a parent, she'll say something to back you up in the presence of the parent, but then afterward she'll come and say that you did something that you shouldn't have. So she'll save face in front of the parent, but then let you know about it after the fact.

Karen also shared her frustration that she wasn't given any administrative backing when she was forced to deal with a difficult parent situation. She recalled her conflicting emotions about the situation. At another point, Karen also shared that when Debbie did finally offer some advice on handling this parent, she was surprised by her suggestions.

I have been struggling since the beginning of the year with a really tough parent and so I would go in and talk to her about it, because the parent was going to the principal and then coming to me and so we tried to stay in a loop with it. I had a

conference with the parent and she told me to sit back in my chair and, I don't wear glasses, but she said, have you ever seen me do this look, where she sits back, crosses her arms and pulls her glasses down and looks down at you and she said, do that to parents and they will know not to mess with you. And I think that that's what she does all the time and it's very intimidating, she's very intimidating.

Karen expressed her surprise with Debbie's suggestion and the way that it reinforced the hierarchical power relations at the school. Casey followed by recalling a similar experience.

She's also given me another tip, one day at a meeting with her she was like, 'yeah, another thing you can do is make sure the chairs that the parents are sitting in are a little bit lower than the chair that you're sitting in'.

Although teachers did concede that sometimes she is simply trying to lighten the mood, these situations served as examples of Debbie's effort to exert authority and impose a hierarchical relationship over parents and teachers.

Formal Evaluation

As previously mentioned in the discussion on informal evaluations, beginning teachers often believe that their professional competencies are evaluated only on a limited and partial basis (Kelchtermans, 1993). After entering a school, they begin to understand the various levels of evaluation that they will be subjected to, through the mechanisms of both informal and formal evaluation techniques and through regular interaction with colleagues and administrators. In a traditional hierarchical system like Smith, principals wield power through the use of the formal evaluation process. Within the school district that Smith resides, there was a formal observation and feedback protocol for principals to

follow. For principals like Debbie, this process gave her the authority to interact with teachers in a defined way, making judgments about teachers' teaching abilities and offering definitive ideas about how to improve their practice.

I really like the professional evaluation thing that we have started this year. We're kind of halfway between the old system that was very much the formal dog and pony show. It was five pages and you had indicators to being the way it's written up with the educational standards that are there for the professional educator. You just write down general and the six categories, you can write down things that you've seen that are evidence of those standards, in any case, any type of setting, so you can use things not only from those if they're in a year where they have to be evaluated formally. The comments that you put in there can come, not only from what you saw when you did that formal observation, but you can use things you saw in committee meetings, parent meetings, walkthroughs, after school activities, interactions that they've had one-on-one with kids, if it's something that shows evidence of meeting that standard. It doesn't have to come from just one arena, so I think that's really nice, because when you're talking about evaluating somebody, it of course is going to look kind of like a laser focus and I think that the new evaluation system, to me, is more like the mosaic of the whole person and their whole instructional life and day here and how they're functioning in that, and I really like that it allows the teacher to bring into this evaluation their evidences of what they feel like, how they see that they are meeting a standard, because sometimes there are things that people do that if you aren't aware of them, then you may never know that.

Although Debbie's description of the evaluation system painted the picture that the process was interactive and collaborative, with an open exchange of ideas and teachers providing input, teachers did not agree with this account. Teachers saw the formal evaluation process as nerve-wracking, but rather routine. Casey described the experience as one where:

We have both formal and informal observations. For the formal ones we set up a time with them and she's [Debbie] my evaluator and then we have a pre-conference to go over the lesson plan. Then we talk some about what we do in the classroom, but they may not see when they're in the classroom. Then we actually have the observation where they come in and we have a follow up conference, discuss how things went with the lesson, what we might change, what we did for a follow up afterwards.

Casey's recall of the evaluation process exhibits the routine nature of the evaluation process. Karen's recollection of the evaluation process was described in further detail.

She [Debbie] does our formal evaluations, she always does the new teacher evaluations. We meet for a post-evaluation meeting, and not once have I ever heard her say, you're doing a great job or there have never been words of encouragement. She did say, 'I like that you did this, this and this', but those are somewhat expected things and then she would give feedback about, 'well, next time maybe you should try this' or 'maybe you should try that', that's the only individual experiences I've had with her.

Dana expressed relief in talking about completing the formal evaluation, stating, "I was so glad for it to be over with, quite honestly, I was very nervous and I signed the paper and

left, it was maybe ten minutes that we were in there," and when asked about how helpful she found the exchange to be, Dana said:

I remember some of the things she was saying and I definitely applied some of those things in my classroom. It was more of her and that might have been me not talking, because of the intimidation that was there. She had printed out on this sheet, what she was going to say, this is what I observed, this is what you need to work on, then it was basically, do you have any questions, she definitely did ask me that and I did not have any questions.

Just as Dana expressed that there was limited praise during the evaluation meetings, there were also no instances where teachers did not receive some form of criticism about their teaching and teachers were hard-pressed to cite examples of praise for effective teaching. Novice teachers at Smith approached their observations with trepidation and often left their post-observation meetings feeling defeated and discouraged about their instructional abilities. These exchanges further exacerbated the hierarchical divide between teachers and the principal, and did not promote productive practices for professional growth and learning.

As an instructional leader, the principal is the primary source of assistance and monitoring. The methods that different principals use to help teachers learn and grow can either stifle or encourage their development as a teacher and a leader. Despite the fact that research cites the importance of collaboration and reflection in the teacher evaluation process (Angelle, 2006), the principal at Smith did not actively engage in meaningful interactions with the novice teachers.

Since teachers at Smith learned to function within the parameters of the school's micropolitics, there were various formal and informal supports in place to aid them through specific events. Many new teachers relied on their colleagues to answer questions and to provide guidance on evaluation matters, while the induction and mentoring program sought to assist teachers as they were monitored. Tara explained how the mentoring support system could assist new teachers in preparing for the evaluation process.

There's supposed to be informal drop-ins and there are formalized times when they visit. Most people have not said that it's been bad or anything, but the nerve-rate before them is pretty high. I think talking to a direct mentor because that's part of what a direct mentor will do too is talk to them before their observations and after their observations. That will help them get plans together or whatever it is, but the whole idea of the PPP is to get away from that dog and pony show. I still think it's a dog and pony show and they're put up, here's your lesson, you feel like you're evaluated on that one.

Through the micropolitics of induction, newcomers learn the cultural norms that define the practices of daily school life, in which patterns of power are included. In order to be successful, new teachers must understand the power differentials within the school and the ways that they themselves could secure power and positions within the school culture.

Conflict and Control

Conflict and control are two hallmarks of micropolitical theory and in schools these types of negative actions and interactions can have grave effects on the school culture and on the members of the school community. As individuals and groups in a school attempt to gain and use formal and informal power, they make decisions about whether to engage in

cooperation or conflict to attain their goals (Blase, 1991). As seen through the case study at Smith Elementary School, teachers perceived that the climate had an air of negativity and that conflict and control pervaded the school culture. As portrayed in the graphic in Figure 4, the school principal held the control in her hands and used it to influence all the other balls she was juggling. Since conflict was also one of the balls in the air, it was often kept in the juggling act at the expense of some of the other balls, such as collegiality or academic instruction.

Blase and Anderson (1995) contended that "most principals are oriented towards control of teachers, although the strategies they use to achieve such control range from openly directive and authoritarian to diplomatic and subtle," (p.11). This statement would adequately characterize the leadership that was exhibited by Debbie, the principal at Smith. While teachers, and even Debbie herself, had varied perspectives on the manner in which her leadership was displayed, there was an overall sense that she was a principal who exerted control over teachers in various ways.

Control

In terms of her personal demeanor and the way Debbie came across to the school community, teachers described a firm and authoritative principal, who is "very tight, not expressive" and "gives the persona that she's up here and we're down there". One teacher captured the essence of the principal's leadership, saying, "She's very firm, as a principal should be, she knows what she wants, she knows how she wants to run her school and that's what she does". As discussed in other sections of this chapter, teachers and students were afraid of the principal and by and large, teachers avoided interactions with her.

Debbie characterized her own leadership as direct and she acknowledged that she used the existing systems to structure processes at Smith so that teachers and students could succeed. The use of the district-approved teacher evaluation instruments and the heavy use of data-driven practices were two ways that she aligned her professional leadership philosophy with the bureaucratic norms of the district. Ball (1987) and Greenfield (1991) would both agree that control can be exerted through formal structures, the enforcement of policies and rules, and through the strategic use of political tactics. To teachers, these straightforward, and at times seemingly harsh, methods for promoting change in practices and improving overall student achievement, were stark evidence that she was an authoritative, goal-oriented leader. Debbie explained:

I am a principal who under instructional leadership am not afraid to use the evaluation system to motivate people to improve. I had four teachers that started out on action plans and three of them were very successful and when we put people on action plans, it is to really be very clear about what needs to be worked on and what supports are going to be in place.

Debbie also described how she focused on controlling certain aspects of the school at different times of the year, and based on district and school requirements and needs. In the beginning of the school year, the focus tended to be on instruction and during mid-spring toward the end of the year, she focused on management tasks associated with testing and preparing for the close of the school year. She believed that by the spring, the instructional program at the school should be “fairly solid” and that the control that was exerted throughout the school year should result in a pay-off during standardized testing. One novice teacher, Isabelle, described her leadership as “my way or the highway”, which was

exemplified in the decision-making around instructional programs. While teachers had strong beliefs and justifications for using or avoiding specific instructional techniques or programs, they felt that they did not have a voice in these matters and that if Debbie wanted them to do something, they must comply, often against their will. Traditionally, principals have been control-oriented and have used a range of direct, overt, and even blatant strategies as well as indirect and subtle strategies to manage teachers (Blase & Blase, 2002).

Alternatively, Debbie acknowledged that she regularly participated in professional development opportunities to broaden her set of knowledge and skills as an administrator. As such, her conversations and engagement with leaders who had different perspectives and different styles should have informed her about approaches to leadership that leaned away from hierarchy and control tactics and instead moved toward the creation of a collaborative environment where shared leadership could be fostered. Research shows that the autonomy and shared decision-making that are preferred in more collaborative models of leadership tend to better meet the needs of teachers than the traditional top-down models of school management (Learning First Alliance, 2005). In these types of leadership, an effective principal is one who shares leadership with and among teachers within the micropolitical environment.

Instructional Control

Teachers would agree that Debbie did center her attention on instructional matters to the extent that she had strong opinions about the way student data should be used to inform instruction, although at times, teachers felt that her intentions were misguided. She was also a champion for instructional programs that may have had proven success in other

schools or had been highlighted at the district-level, but again, the instructional decisions were often made in a silo and did not take teacher opinions about those programs into consideration.

Throughout the visits to Smith Elementary School, an overriding theme was that assessments and data-driven thinking, decision-making and action were largely promoted at the school. As part of the principal's personal and professional vision that students would be successful on standardized tests, she expected that teachers would engage in ongoing assessment techniques and would constantly evaluate student data to inform their instruction. While data-driven instruction and decision-making have been emphasized in recent years, and teachers and administrators alike can see the value in this approach, teachers at Smith had been so burdened by the data that they felt that Debbie had lost sight of the instruction that needed to precede data collection. Casey expressed that:

Unfortunately, because we are so data-driven and expecting and needing the students to do so well on the tests and stuff that that's what we put out there first is, 'okay we need to just teach them what they need to know for the test' and unfortunately we let the rest of the stuff go by the wayside.

Casey's comments attended to the fact that Debbie's narrow-minded approach to instruction influenced the entire micropolitical environment at Smith. Teachers asserted that the solitary focus on data and assessments was not only hard on them, but Isabelle explained how the pressure on teachers affected their students as well. The discouragement that was felt in the conversations with teachers offered evidence that the current micropolitical state at Smith was a hindrance to their satisfaction and their success.

There was also a sense that while the data could be useful and informative, this approach did not always take into consideration the unique learning needs or diverse backgrounds of their students. Alex contested that she understood the importance of collecting student data but that there needed to be some professional judgment that was allowed for teachers. Karen commented about the different learning styles of her students and how that could impact the data and assessments. Overall, teachers felt oppressed by the data and looked at the collection and use of this information as something that hindered rather than helped them improve their instructional practices.

Debbie had a large role to fill within this scenario; her power and control could either encourage or discourage novice teachers as they developed lifelong professional habits and practices. Unfortunately, her allegiance to bureaucratic processes overshadowed her vision for student-centered learning. While the chain of accountability based on accreditation, licensure, and certification requirements was put in place to support the goals of NCLB, it is unclear how these requirements have helped to increase teacher quality or teacher retention (Martinez-Garcia & Slate, 2009; Ingersoll, 2003c), especially at the school level.

As teachers delved deeper into their feelings about the use of assessments and data, they indicated that their professional autonomy was not always respected and that if they were to make an instructional decision that violated the expectations or mandates of the school, they would be fearful of being reprimanded. Both Karen and Casey expressed their worry that they are doing something wrong even when they are making sound instructional decisions to meet the needs of their students. While there were no specific references to sanctions or formal reprimands being issued to teachers for their instructional choices, the

micropolitical climate at Smith was such that teachers were nervous and fearful that action could be taken against them. By emphasizing autonomy and choice for teachers, rather than control and competition, principals can influence the micropolitical organization in constructive ways (Blase & Blase, 1999).

Recognition of Teachers

Along with the concerns teachers have about their exerting their professional autonomy, they also expressed that chastisements were more openly given than any form of appreciation or recognition. Blase (1989) has discussed how teachers are often limited in their opportunities for participation in decision-making and in accessing opportunities for advancement. Primarily surrounding the data meetings, teachers were made to feel inadequate about their students' performance, and while formal sanctions were not given, there was the fear that they could be in trouble for low academic achievement. Isabelle shared that "You pretty much find out when you're doing a bad job during a data meeting...so those can be nerve-wracking sometimes, you know, if you have a bad test".

When asked about acknowledgment of good data, Isabelle stated that, "There's still no recognition, it's move on, next test, somebody else give a test and then if that's good then we move on to something else". Mary talked about the simplicity of offering praise to teachers.

It works for kids, it works for adults. It works for everybody. I wouldn't say we get a lot of kudos for anything, the occasional, 'good job' and that's it. Teacher appreciation week they do a few things nice for us, but during the rest of the year I wouldn't say there's a lot of recognition. It's not like some are being recognized and others aren't. I think it's pretty across the board. Being a teacher, it's not like you

can get a bonus. I do realize it's probably harder than a business job because I've worked in business too and I think sometimes words just do a lot.

Casey mentioned that during post-evaluation conferences, "Yeah, we get positive feedback, things that we're doing well and then, of course, things we can improve on,".

Dana also reiterated that the formal observation as one of the only ways for a teacher to receive some feedback, be it positive or negative.

Through teacher and principal interactions that heighten the personal and professional trust within the school, the micropolitical environment can be cultivated through the appreciation of teachers and the recognition of their accomplishments. The use of recognition as a form of appreciation and motivation for teachers was severely lacking at Smith Elementary School.

Teachers could not directly name any forms of acknowledgement that they had received over the last year, despite the fact that Debbie detailed aspects of her recognition strategy, mainly revolving around acknowledgement of high test scores. She referenced the drop in the bucket technique where teachers received a note in their mailbox and could save it to put in their personal bucket, or the use of "Ed the Eagle", who was used to allow anyone in the school to recognize others for the work they do, such as being a good team member or helping out with a lesson. Although she stated that, "I try and switch it up every year, just because if not it gets stale", it appeared that teachers were largely unaware of these efforts. Teachers in the case study did not mention one of these strategies that Debbie described. Debbie contended that many teachers do not desire recognition, which is why she believed those initiatives did not always take off.

It seems like it starts off well at the beginning of the year and then by the time we get to this time of the year they don't care (laughs). They just want to be done. And that's one of the questions that I ask every year at the end of the year when we're going over the strategic plan. I always talk about communication and ask, 'how would you like to be recognized?' and it's really funny because you will find some people that can tell you that and you have other people that they don't care whether they're recognized or not, at least that's what they say. Everybody wants to be recognized, you know, and again that goes back to what is of value to folks.

Debbie's perception of what was important to teachers was off mark; teachers in the study contended that they do desire recognition and affirmation and simply do not receive enough of it. This lack of acknowledgement on Debbie's part that this was even a problem pointed to the fact that her control of this aspect of the school micropolitics was defined by her unique outlook and did not consider the perspective of the teachers. In an example of teacher-generated recognition at the school, Tara explained that she started off the mentoring meetings with "grows and glows", providing a forum for teachers to share what was going well, no matter how simple or trivial teachers may think it was. Tara felt that celebrating those moments was important for new teachers. Teachers appreciate the recognition that they bring unique skills and knowledge their teaching roles and schools (Cherubini, 2007), and this is often more important to them than salary or other pecuniary factors. At Smith, like many other schools, teachers felt that professional growth opportunities and credit or rewards for effective performance were absent.

Casey and Mary also both shared her thoughts, saying that the compliments were few and far between and often they just fell by the wayside. Other teachers, like Dana and

Alex had an expectation that teachers would be formally recognized in some type of “teacher of the year” celebration or even a verbal acknowledgement at a staff meeting that certain teachers have achieved something memorable. They were disappointed to find out that at Smith, those forms of appreciation and honor for teachers were lacking. Essential to the satisfaction of new teachers was a level of respect and awareness of their professional status. Those actions are mainly the responsibility of the principal, and at Smith, Debbie had not placed a high value on activities of this nature, often falsely contesting that teachers did not want such attention.

Beyond the internal recognition that teachers were missing, the families of children at Smith were not inclined to show appreciation for teachers in typical ways. Debbie explained the reasons for this.

This is not a school that on teacher appreciation week, that you have parents bringing stuff up here that, you have a lot of presents being given or anything like that. I think that when the teachers have conferences, for the most part, the parents will thank the teacher for what they're doing and things like that. I think part of that recognition piece of what some people see traditionally as being appreciative of teachers, I suspect some of it is cultural and also some of it is economic. I know some of the teachers have laughed about their friends that teach at other schools and the last day of school the parents bring a gift card to the spa or dinner out for the teacher and their husband and all that. Not going to happen when you're 73% free and reduced lunch.

Debbie's dismissal of the recognition issue as being related to student and parent demographics was really an excuse for her lack of attention to this matter. By putting the

issue on the parents, Debbie took the responsibility off of herself, and in her mind, she did not have to be accountable for the level of appreciation shown to teachers.

Conflict

Malen and Cochran (2008) contended that authoritative parameters and power structures are at work in schools, and those power differentials have effects on teachers through their designated responsibilities, the distribution of resources, and the various policies that are enacted upon them. While teachers and principal did not refer to specific examples of direct conflict between staff members at Smith, there was an underlying sense that conflict was in the micropolitical culture. Teachers felt conflicted about their practices and their educational philosophies because the things that they were taught in the teacher preparation programs were not aligning with what was being required or encouraged in their first teaching experience. They also felt a pull between what they thought were best practices for their students and what requirements were being pushed on them. Schools are controlled by bureaucratic procedures like rules, policies, and regulations which are under the control of principals. As Ingersoll (2004a) contended, principals may exercise their formal and informal authority to monitor and evaluate teachers' adherence to those procedures. These actions and interactions tend to incite teachers and create conflict that could likely be avoided or handled in different ways.

Procedural Events

Procedural events relate to the actions and functions that take place at the school level in order to keep the school building running and to uphold the school's purpose in an efficient manner. Sometimes the procedural events can be aligned with the school vision and the organizational culture that is promoted, but in large part, procedural events are

simply bureaucratic actions that are used to maintain the expected functions of the school. By referring to the visual display in Figure 4, readers can see that procedural events are another one of the balls that was tossed into the air by the principal. In the following section, the sub-themes of procedural events, such as meetings, management tasks, material interests, and rules and procedures, are addressed in order to create a clear picture of the ways in which procedural events helped to sustain the school in efficient ways, while at the same time, prevented other micropolitical actions from happening in useful ways.

Meetings

At Smith Elementary School, like many schools, social and cultural norms emerged in meetings and informal interactions, revealing the hierarchy among school staff. Novice teachers at Smith observe and react to the cultural codes, or regimes of truth, that they see displayed in these meetings (Foucault, 1970). One of the primary vehicles for regular communication between teachers and the principal were during the weekly staff meeting and the weekly grade-level data meeting.

The staff meetings at Smith were relatively brief and to the point, primarily addressing procedural topics. Teachers generally arrived on time, sat in their grade-level clusters, and chatted informally before and during the meeting. Meetings were generally led by the principal or assistant principal, with other mid-level administrators presenting at times. Teachers asserted that they were mainly listeners at the staff meetings and were not called on to participate very often. Karen succinctly described the staff meetings, saying, “She [Debbie] stands up front with her paper and she reads off her paper and at the end she always asks if each grade level has something to share for the good of the group, but that’s

pretty much it”. My observations of the staff meetings provide further evidence that Debbie led the meeting by peering over her glasses to read down a list of agenda items. Teachers did not have an agenda in front of them and while they appeared to be attentive, few were taking notes or asking questions. In another opposing example, the assistant principal led a staff meeting in Debbie’s absence and the lack of control over the staff was obvious. As the assistant principal went through information quickly, lots of side conversations happened, and there seemed to be confusion as she jumped from topic to topic. Furthermore, much of the meeting appeared to revolve around directives for teachers. In both instances, there appeared to be a sense of urgency on the part of the teachers and the administrators as they attempted to quickly run through the agenda and conclude the meeting as soon as possible.

The weekly data meetings provided an opportunity for each grade-level team to meet, in order to present and analyze the data from their weekly benchmarks and formative assessments to Debbie, and to discuss instructional next steps. Debbie asserted that the data meetings were rather in-depth, involving a series of different collaborative discussions about student data, but in my observations of these meetings, they seemed much less systematic, more brief and generalized, and principal-directed. As observed in the data meetings, the teachers came in and Debbie made small talk with some of them as others arrived. Some of the novice teachers had mentioned previously that they thought Debbie would alter her communication style depending on who was present in a particular meeting, possibly acting more friendly or open with teachers than she would normally act. Debbie depicted the data meetings in the following way:

Thursdays are the data meetings that I've talked about before where we're looking at data, we're looking at remediation, we're looking at pacing. I'm asking what else do we need, if there's staff development that's needed or support from here, from Title I if it's the math is going down or do we need to pull somebody from the central office.

Outside of the weekly data talk, teachers mentioned that these grade-level data meetings with the principal served as a forum for conversation about routine matters such as field trips, supply lists, or testing dates. Teachers would generally bring a topic of concern to the table if needed. Debbie's appraisal of the data meetings as a collaborative forum for teacher conversation around instructional matters seemed to be faulty. In personal observations and through teacher interviews, there was not sufficient evidence to claim that these meetings serve as comprehensive and inclusive professional opportunity to discuss instructional matters.

In addition to these two standard meeting types, teachers also met with their grade-level teams for planning once a week, as required, but several teachers mentioned that informal and impromptu meetings with colleagues would also take place on a regular basis. Debbie shed some light on the weekly planning meetings that each grade-level was required to have.

Every week the requirement is on Mondays to have common planning time. You plan any day together, but they have to, as a team, get together on Monday and there are team minute meetings that they fill out with the objectives we're working on. They turn it in and I initial it and there's a place on there for administrative support they need, what they're working on, plans for how they're going to teach,

who's going to be doing what. It's a one page short thing and we've got abbreviations for it, but that is just standard practice here.

Debbie's explanation of the planning meetings evidences the procedural nature of this weekly task for teachers. Mary complained that the planning time often got eaten up by other meetings or duties.

During your encore time is when you're supposed to have your meetings, like we're doing now, or planning and very often the planning just never happens, because there's a meeting or there's this thing or there's that thing. There's something going on that you just don't ever get to have your planning and that makes it very difficult, because you can never get papers graded, you can never get grades entered into the computer and that always has to be done.

Mary's irritation with the lack of planning time was indicative of the types of frustrations that begin to create problems for teachers over time; if administrators were not protecting the teachers' time, it signaled to teachers that their planning and preparation time is not an important school goal. Furthermore, because the case study took place in the spring, there were several other meetings being scheduled for teachers to meet as committees and advisory groups to contribute to the schoolwide planning process. Teachers asserted that because of the routine nature of meeting topics, they are not as useful as they would like them to be; moreover, the time meetings take away from teachers' other duties heightens their stress levels.

Just as Schempp, Sparkes, and Templin (1993) described, "Meetings were a primary platform for executing school duties...Meetings served as important locations in the micropolitics of teacher induction...Meetings and school functions offered an

opportunity to be viewed by colleagues, administrators, and others as part of the school culture." (p. 460). This depiction of school meetings rang true for the micropolitical state at Smith. Since there were few other formalized opportunities for teachers to engage in face-to-face communications during the school day at Smith, those meetings served as a prime occasion for socialization into the culture. The priorities were clear, in that the grade-level meetings were structured solely around data, and that staff meetings were for conveying standard information to all staff members. Both meeting types were administrator-led and evoked little teacher participation or input. Schempp et al. (1993) summarized this notion by asserting that the micropolitics of teacher relationships involve an understanding of the roles played by different members of the school culture, the messages sent between the members, and the strategies that can be used to gain influence among those members.

Management Tasks

Mullen and Jones (2008) contended that the roles and responsibilities of the principalship often align with either management tasks or instructional leadership activities, and there is frequently an imbalance in how principals decide to allocate their time and efforts. For various reasons, many principals tend to focus more heavily on the management aspect of schools, largely ignoring the instructional needs of their teachers and students. This absence of quality principal leadership and support was apparent at Smith and created feelings of helplessness, frustration, and isolation in many of the novice teachers.

Observations throughout the school day exemplified how time was spent by the school principal at Smith. In her descriptions of daily routines and activities, as well as through direct observation, it was noted that Debbie spent much of her day engaged in

routine tasks related to the management of the school. In her general run-through of what her day looked like, it was notable that the majority of tasks that were recalled related to oversight of the physical aspects of the school building.

I come in as the teachers are arriving and before the kids get here and usually the first thing I do is just check in at the office to see if we've had any phone calls, if there's been anything that's occurred in the building overnight. So you kind of come in and deal with the mechanics if you will, then I normally come into my office and I'll boot up my email and check to be sure I don't have any red envelope emails, so something that's going on that's going to require an immediate action. There have been examples of some schools of where like buses have had problems and you would know that you're going to have late buses and things of that nature or it runs the gamut. So once I check and make sure I don't have any red envelopes, then I just kind of try and walk around the building and usually go out front, check the car rider line to make sure that's going smoothly and that we haven't backed up to the point.

As seen from her listing of tasks she attended to on a daily basis, Debbie's morning was pretty routine and procedural. One day, Debbie and the assistant principal were observed in the office handling a student discipline situation and talking with the secretary about how to get coverage for a teacher to participate in a parent meeting. She also spoke about her frustration with the time and effort that parent meetings generally took.

Usually the days I really dread are when you've had really angry parents who have gotten real bent out of shape, because their child has gone home and told them something. You end up having to have these meetings and you never know how it's

going to go, but I just dread the days where you've got the parent coming in and you've got the teacher coming in and you've got to somehow sort between that to figure out where the truth is and I don't know why that is, because I've never had one that did not go well.

A lot of time was spent “putting out fires” and managing the unplanned situations that arose. Debbie also explained that she put in a long day at the school, but it went really quickly, since there are a variety of things to tackle each day. She noted that “You never know what your day's going to be like, you can have a plan and in fact I jokingly say if I make a list, that's just the kiss of death for the list”. Blase and Anderson (1995) asserted that closed principals generally focused on procedural tasks, while open principals tended to offer instructional support. While practical issues such as building maintenance and student discipline are key areas of a school's functioning, it was apparent that Debbie paid more attention to these factors than other worthy matters.

Through an active physical presence and responsiveness in the school building, principals demonstrate for new teachers the importance of administrative support and collegiality for professional growth and instructional improvement. Teachers need to have a sense that the principal is involved in productive activities and using her authority to benefit the overall happenings at the school. The novice teachers at Smith seemed to recognize that those tasks were time-consuming, important, and valuable to the functioning of the school, however, they wished they could also see a balance of involvement in other types of leadership activities that may have directly benefited the teaching and learning in their classrooms. Teachers agreed that one of Debbie's strengths was the way she was able to manage the school effectively. They asserted that many of the things that happened at

Smith were due to her hard work behind the scenes and her efforts to ensure that the school was running efficiently.

Debbie contended that depending on the time of year, she was more involved in different types of leadership activities. For example, at the beginning of the school year, there was a heavy focus on instruction and then after the spring testing season, her focus moved to more management tasks.

At that point in time that's when you're looking at who's leaving, you're doing interviews for people that have retired or moved, and I usually have about four or five positions that I need to fill. I'm looking at my enrollment, trying to guess what I'm going to need in terms of staffing the next year and where I want people to go and again taking into account teacher requests of things that they would like to try or movement that they would like to have along with what's the fit and the needs. We end up at this time of year also having to turn in a revised budget after the county board of supervisors have sent the budget and we've got about an eight page end of the year checkout list of all these things that have to be done in terms of our time lines for special ed, getting summer school set up, ordering supplies for the next year, looking at repair things that need to be done over the summer. So basically when you move into late April and May and your instruction program is fairly solid, you become more of a manager, because you're getting things set up for what's going to take place the next year and there are just a lot of reports and things that end up happening.

While those management tasks were critical to the school's successful functioning, Debbie's unbalanced commitment to different leadership tasks was an obvious sign to teachers that the micropolitics at Smith were not always in their favor.

Due to the amount of time occupied by some of the administrative duties, Debbie did get frustrated and wished there were some more streamlined systems for handling paperwork and collecting certain data.

Some of the reports and systems that they're asking for, there's sometimes I think, if you would just go into this system you would have that information. Why have I got to fill it out and put it in a form for you? So the pulling out of the building and some of the management pieces, if they would look at trying to diminish that, that would be helpful, because it really would give you more time to be in the classrooms, walking around, doing, seeing what's going on, having conversations. She acknowledges that her time would be better spent in classrooms rather than centering her attention on the routine management tasks of the school. Leadership and engagement in instructional activities tend to have a greater influence on novice teachers, so principals are wise to focus their efforts in this area. Although the principal seems aware of where her time was allocated, she may not have fully comprehended the impact this imbalance had on the morale of teachers and on the micropolitical state of the school.

Material Interests

Although a frequently cited issue in relation to working conditions is the lack of adequate resources offered to teachers, namely materials and supplies required to fulfill their teaching responsibilities, this was not a problem that plagued teachers at Smith Elementary School. Ingersoll (2004a) asserted that since principals largely control the

access to these resources, this is one way they can exert indirect control, or use "sticks and carrots" over teachers. However, at Smith, while material resources seemed to be plentiful, it did not appear that Debbie was using resources as a control tactic over teachers. Instead, it seemed as if these material resources were offered to make their jobs easier and more effectual.

In the conversations with teachers at Smith, and through observations in classrooms and the teacher work room, it was obvious that the provision of material resources was not a problem at the school. Meeting the material interests of teachers is one type of management task that principals engage in, fulfilling teachers' immediate needs and ensuring that the appropriate tools are in place for student learning to occur. As Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002b) described, the access to teaching materials, funds, infrastructure, and time for job preparation, which principals give to teachers demonstrates the power and influence they have over teachers which can impact novice teachers' job performance in many ways.

Casey explained that resources were readily provided to teachers at Smith, saying, "If there's any resources that we need and stuff, we just go to administration and they're usually more than willing to make sure that we get what we need". He went on to describe that many resources and materials were in his classroom when he arrived at Smith, and that retiring teachers would share their resources and administrators would often purchase additional items for new teachers. Despite the complaints that Karen had about the lack of emotional support and administrative guidance with a tough situation in her classroom, she did affirm that material resources were provided to her when she entered her position after the start of the school year, stating, "She [Debbie] went out and bought a whole bunch of

stuff for my classroom before I came and there was, like, bags of stuff everywhere, but that's, I guess that might be her form of support". Tara also shared that a bag of supplies is provided for each new teacher, to include some creature comforts and some useful instructional items.

It changes every year, just general like for your desk kind of stuff and I've done the zip drives in the past, so when they have lessons or whatever they can put it on there. What I'm hoping to do this year is get all their curriculum documents loaded onto the zip drives for them, the brochure, the who's who pamphlet, all of that that we're going to go over and even the agenda I'm going to give to them, so then they can add whatever they want to it, but then they have their curriculum documents. They've got everything they need to be successful, so I try to put in some gum and some chocolates and stuff like that just for fun.

The effort made by Tara to appeal to teachers' immediate needs and their comfort was likely an appreciated gesture. Teachers' instructional conversations often involved discussion about which resources would be available to promote specific teaching strategies. Debbie explained that she was willing to use funds toward teachers' professional development.

I spent this year on one teacher, I spent \$3000 for a reading class and the level books that went with it, because it was very apparent to me that while she was extremely strong, particularly in the area of science, but she really did not have a clear understanding of how to differentiate her instruction appropriately. She did not understand children's reading levels and how to properly assess those and then

look at and select materials that would give the content information delivered to them at a level that would be meaningful, it wasn't their instructional level.

Spending of this type was important to Debbie, but she believed that it needed to be worthwhile for teachers. In one staff meeting, Debbie addressed the topic of substitute expenditures, quoting the budgeted figure of \$30,000 and explaining that \$41,000 had already been spent. She acknowledged that some of the spending was for release time and meetings and that it was not money spent poorly, but that teachers needed to keep this in mind when they were planning to take "mental health" days through the end of the year. All of those examples of provision of material resources for teachers suggested that Debbie was aware that she had the power and the ability to provide the tools for teachers to effectively do their job at Smith.

Alex also mentioned that the resources and trainings that were provided were an important complement to the new curricular programs that were introduced. She said, "We invested all this money on these books, which we used but then without any training and then once I took the class I realized, oh, that's how to use it (laughs)". Having been at the school for several years in one capacity or another, Alex attested to the fact that Debbie has made significant physical improvements to the school and that should not be undermined because it contributed to the teaching and learning processes at Smith.

She's tough and she really does care. She's got our backs (laughs) and you can tell she's done so much for this school. I remember when I first got here, it was awful, the façade. You come in the first thing you smell in the morning is urine and the walls were just dingy, it was nasty. I don't know how she managed it, but she got enough money and the school has been renovated. Each and every classroom has a

smart board, which is amazing and I think she has a lot to do with that. Next year they're building more classrooms and I think we're going to be able to have a computer lab and a new playground, she has acquired computers for the kids, so she's always out there trying to do stuff, acquire things.

Through these comments, Alex recognized that the backstage behaviors that Debbie engaged in were worthwhile and did contribute to the school's overall success in specific ways.

Blase and Anderson (1995) described that through their research on different types of principals, it was revealed that closed principals generally interacted with teachers regarding material resources and requests for permission, while open principals interacted with teachers for the purposes of material, technical, and symbolic support. It appeared that Debbie's attempts to fulfill the material needs for teachers reflected her understanding that this was one piece of a successful instructional program.

One of the chief complaints that teachers voiced about the resources in the school was the fact that the copy machine was frequently in disrepair and unable to be used. As Isabelle explained, the instructional implications for teachers were greater than one may expect.

Usually I go downstairs to make a copy and the copiers are broken, always broken or jammed when you're using them, then you don't have time. So you have to come up with something else than what you planned, but since we have three copiers downstairs and a rizzo, but we're on a paper shortage this year and we actually have a set amount of paper you have to use. We keep opening them and closing them and opening them and closing them and I think that's adding to the wear and tear.

They've been breaking down a lot, so typically my day starts with the copiers not working or if they do, then I know it's going to be a good day.

Mary echoed Isabelle's sentiments, stressing how much of a problem the non-working copy machines created.

You cannot use the copier during planning time, before school or after school. The copiers are a huge problem (laughs) because they're never working. When you only have that limited time and you're down there trying to make copies and then you're stuck, because then you haven't been able to get what you need done to be prepared for your class.

Without this basic instructional need being met, teachers were forced to reassess and regroup their teaching plans each day. The frustration that teachers expressed over this issue was valid, but was either not brought to Debbie's attention or she selected to disregard the importance of the problem.

Debbie even shared that there is an expectation on the part of new teachers that up-to-date technology and classroom equipment was provided for them. She recalled one teacher who interviewed at Smith asking about this.

She [the teacher] said, 'have you got cameras, do you have any smart boards?' and I'll have to say, we wrote a grant and then we used our site-based money for about three years to make sure every classroom has a smart board or wireless, paid for the things that you need in the building to make it wireless when they renovated us. So the fact that I can tell a teacher, yes, you'll have a smart board and we're wireless and you will be given a laptop to plan as a classroom teacher, it's not going to be an old desktop, I found it really interesting.

It is apparent that having the latest in technological resources was an important priority for Debbie as she worked to ensure that Smith used the most advanced instructional techniques. For her, acquiring resources in this way was in keeping with her vision that all children could learn at high standards and that data and assessments would assist teachers in helping them to achieve. She explained how having the most current technology could aid students and teachers at Smith.

Just think about what a difference it makes for the education these children are getting, as opposed to children that are in [other] schools. That whole equity issue of having the same types of resources. Regardless of the technology, you want people to know basic good instruction, so that when they begin to use those skills, what they're putting out there is going to truly focus on here's where we are on the curriculum, out of this objective, this is what the kids need to know, this is what they need to be able to do. For the future of our country and economy, knowing they'll be able to take and apply it in these situations that we don't know about today and synthesize new things that will help us stay ahead and that ultimately is, is the piece that good instruction will do for kids.

Along with the material resources that teachers were given, they were also provided with creature comforts to help make their meetings or professional development sessions more pleasant. In fact, Debbie provided snacks and drinks for the teachers participating in the focus group. She sent an email that said "light refreshments will be provided so you can keep your strength up". Those are the types of actions that Debbie did to make Smith a better place to be, and those gestures often went unnoticed or unappreciated by teachers.

Rules and Procedures

Ball (1987) contended that control is exerted through formal structures and the enforcement of policies and rules. At Smith Elementary School, it was clear that there were established practices and procedures that defined the micropolitical state. Debbie's no-nonsense manner of administration was evident in the rules and procedures that were used at Smith. Debbie shared an anecdote about a parent who tried to usurp the school rules and she reinforced the importance of security at Smith, saying, "I explained to him the whole thing about the security issues, we use these drills all the time and it's been drilled in our head, when somebody comes in the building we have to put down exactly where they're going". The attention to school rules and procedures seemed to be a priority at Smith.

Other district procedures involved the transfer period that any teacher in the district could apply for. Debbie contended that during that hiring period, she often sought teachers from other county schools because teachers from that pool would come with a familiarity about the procedures and norms within the district.

I don't care whether you're with the military or the government or education, they [teachers from within the district] are familiar with some of the programs that are used district-wide, like if I say PPP, they're going to know that's the evaluation system or if I say, that's at the Kettle Center, they're going to know that's the central office.

Since school and district procedures were important to Debbie, her actions and motivations reflected her priorities at Smith. In looking around Debbie's office, it was neat and organized with charts and district memos posted on boards and walls around the room. In

keeping with her leaning toward management of the school, one teacher, Mary described how her leadership approach aligned best with rules and procedures.

She is the boss and she is the principal, she's the leader, whatever you want to call it, so I think her job is more business than instructional. You know, I don't think she's supposed to be instructing us so much as doing the business role.

Other teachers concurred, saying that Debbie exemplified business-like traits as a school leader. Casey described his perception of her leadership style.

More along the lines of the business sense, to make sure things get done and because as we've all mentioned before, here things are very much data driven.

Everything seems to come down to the numbers, so it's more of a business sense to make sure there's the results that they want get produced.

Moreover, Karen discussed how Debbie's straightforward management style came across in the micropolitics of the school.

I feel like, the way she conducts our meetings, I mean, you saw in our data meeting, I felt like she was acting a little bit. I was really surprised, I had a feeling that that would happen, but I was really interested that she was a lot more bubbly and 'what do you guys think?' and that's not how it normally goes. It's more so, 'okay, let's look at your data, alright, good job, good job, oh, what happened, okay, what can we do, this is what's coming up, this is what we have next month, this is what I need from you'. That's about the extent of our data meetings (laughs). She was a lot more smiley.

The perceptions that these novice teachers shared exemplify Debbie's prevailing leadership style; clearly teachers are influenced by her approach, and not in positive ways.

Debbie acknowledged that the expectations for principals have changed over time and that her focus has had to shift with the times.

What is expected of principals has changed over the years, from when I was in elementary school, they pretty much were the manager part. I really feel like, that we get a lot of things that pull us out of the building, for meetings, whether they be the monthly principals meetings, you have to serve your time going to the district gifted meetings, they'll have different focus groups, they want you to come to different trainings that are during the school day. It would just be very helpful, if much like we try and protect instructional time for teachers, so they can teach, they're not having to do a lot of other stuff, if they could really let principals stay in their building.

Teachers would likely disagree that Debbie has moved away from a management approach and more toward an instructional approach. Again, her leaning toward a management style of leadership was largely reflected in the micropolitics at Smith.

Throughout the observations and interviews at Smith, it was noted that paperwork and completion of forms were recurring activities and not ones that were favored by teachers. In fact, Alex shared her disgust with completing paperwork and attested to the fact that it created an undue amount of stress on her as she tried to balance the multiple demands of teaching and unnecessary paperwork as well. Since the case study took place during the same timeframe as spring testing, there was also a heavy focus on preparation for assessments during the staff meetings and in informal conversations among staff.

Beyond the district mandated technology competencies, the trainings on suicide prevention and sexual harassment, Tara asserted that all new teachers were provided with a wealth of training experiences. The orientation and induction program at Smith served as the initial opportunity for novice teachers to be exposed to the rules and procedures at the school. Along with a tour of the school, filling out forms and hearing about the principal's expectations, Tara also shared that she had created a brochure for the upcoming year so that new teachers would know the key players at the school and the function they served. For novice teachers at Smith, beginning to understand the important roles and building relationships with the right people was the first step in being enveloped in the micropolitics of the school.

Neutralizing Events

Neutralizing events are actions and interactions that occur within a school that do not have the effect of tipping the balance toward or against positive micropolitics. These events are characterized as neutral because they can be perceived by some to have positive effects, while others perceive them to have negative effects; still, others would see them as not having an effect at all. I coined this term because in reviewing the literature on school micropolitics, it was noted that certain actions or activities were used in ways that simultaneously worked for and against teachers, such as exchange theories, contrived collegiality, and strategic compliance. These sub-themes of neutralizing events are fully described in the following sections in order to depict the ways that the micropolitical environment at Smith maintains a state of equilibrium despite the fact that other positive and negative actions are being "tossed" around the school. The visual display of this notion is seen in Figure 4, as the ball of neutralizing events was hovering in the air above the

principal and was not necessarily part of the juggling act. While the neutralizing events were under the control of the principal, there was interplay with teachers that had the effect of making these events neither strongly aligned to the positive or negative actions that took place at the school.

Exchange Theories

One of the most widely known neutralizing events described in micropolitical theory is the notion of exchange theories. Anderson (1991) defined exchange theories as the ways teachers attempt to maximize the gains and minimize the costs of their interactions as a way to reach desired outcomes. Through the navigation of relationships and events at the school level, it was likely that teachers at Smith were unconsciously using exchange theory to manage their expectations and to ensure that their most pressing needs were met, while also making every attempt to fulfill their responsibilities as teachers. This involved more than a simple give-and-take, especially for novice teachers who were learning about the norms and the culture of the school and still trying to understand their role within the school. As researchers (Ball, 1987; Schempp, Sparkes & Templin, 1993) have contended, veteran teachers help to induct new teachers, transferring knowledge about the school's traditions and mores and transitioning them into their role, while also preserving their own sets of interests. All teachers and administrators come to utilize an instrumental aspect of micropolitical literacy to engage a repertoire of strategies and tactics to achieve their own goals within schools.

Contrived Collegiality

Contrived collegiality is a micropolitical tactic in which administrators regulate or compel teachers to engage in particular activities within the school (Hargreaves, 1991).

There were several examples where teachers seemed to be in meetings that were not of their own design. They were asked to come together for a purpose that was unknown to them or they were being presented with topics that were not relevant to their needs. For the group of teachers who were told to pull together an impromptu meeting, in which the principal wanted to participate as an observer and occasional contributor, this meeting seemed unnatural and an uncommon occurrence. Novice teacher Rebecca also expressed her perspective that the mentoring program demonstrated contrived collegiality. She stated:

I think it would've been better if there were optional things that we could do and there was a schedule of, this is what we're meeting about this month and then the first year teachers or the novice teachers can choose that this is something they want to be a part of, instead of having to go to some of the things that really did not apply.

The micropolitical perspective points to the difficulty all teachers, but especially novice teachers, have in protecting their personal and professional rights and opinions as they make decisions about what professional activities they should engage in, if and when they are given a choice.

It was interesting that there would be examples of contrived collegiality at Smith because teachers gave the impression that in general terms, collegial relations between teachers were not encouraged, and often even discouraged. Since authentic forms of collegiality did not seem to be valued or supported, it followed that the creation of false experiences would be even less well received by teachers. On the administrative side, these inauthentic collegial events provided evidence that teachers were engaging in collaboration, but there was little attention from the principals about the quality of those

events and interactions or about how well the teachers responded to different types of activities. Teachers were pretty astute at recognizing inauthenticity and Alex even asserted that, “I just tell my colleagues ‘what are they going to do, shave my head and send me to the infantry?’”. In the section on collegiality, several options for authentic activities were presented and these research-based practices are not only well received by teachers, but have proven success in promoting professional growth, teacher satisfaction, and ultimately influencing student achievement.

Strategic Compliance

As a way of becoming part of the culture, some new teachers engage in strategic compliance, such as joining a committee as a way to acquire knowledge and develop relationships (Schempp et al., 1993). In a micropolitical setting like Smith, teachers were often compelled to participate in certain meetings or activities that they would otherwise not elect to be part of. In the same way, teachers must figure out how to navigate the opportunities and interactions before them, at times using their autonomy to make decisions about what will best suit their needs and goals, both in professional and personal terms. In the interviews with novice teachers, it was clear that they regularly called upon their own judgment to make choices about how their instructional and professional development time would be spent. Using their professional knowledge and common sense, they spoke about having to prioritize their participation in certain activities. For example, Tara explained that:

Baldrige for one, there are teachers in here who use hardly any Baldrige and there are some who really embrace it. I think there are some things about Baldrige that are wonderful and I do them in my room, whether Debbie or Ms. Maxwell

says, are you doing this, are you doing this, I'm going to do it because I see the benefit of it, but if you don't see that benefit (laughs), you think it's just a waste of time.

In their discussions about an action-based learning program that was recently presented to them, teachers scoffed at implementing it so late in the year and with so many other demands on their plate. Alex justified her team's perspective, saying, "Why now? Wait 'til next year when we can plan a schedule and figure it all out, so not this year, we only really have a few more weeks left". Karen acceded that while her team did not express their opinion to Debbie, they had decided as a team not to start the program until the next school year, and were just going to engage in strategic non-compliance.

Often the teachers' reasons for strategic compliance or non-compliance related to the extensive instructional demands that were placed on them, often without forethought or understanding about the ripple effect this had on teachers and students at the classroom level. Teachers talked about the continual addition of programs and initiatives throughout the school year, often without proper training or support, and many times lacking a concern about the strain it puts on teachers. They expressed that just when they got something under their belt, they were expected to take on a new initiative. At times, teachers were also presented with instructional requirements without proper training to support that instructional goal. In order to prepare students for online testing, Debbie explained that teachers would need to give students a practice experience of doing the whole test to build stamina and to simulate online testing. Teachers questioned how they could do this when they, and their students, were not provided with the necessary technology instruction.

This disregard on the part of the principal about the impact such decisions have on teachers and students was taken seriously by teachers, especially beginning teachers who were not accustomed to making judgments about the importance of particular “mandates” and did not always know whether and how to be non-compliant. Tara expressed the general feeling that new teachers must have had, saying, “As a new teacher you're going to do everything that your principal tells you because you don't want to lose your job. You don't know if it's going to work or not, you just kind of go with the flow”. Novice teachers at Smith had learned early on, that in order to effectively manage their time and energy in the most fruitful ways, they had to make choices about what instructional practices were best suited to their students and their classrooms. In many cases, these teachers simply shut their classroom doors and taught as they saw fit, taking external suggestions with a grain of salt.

Much in the same manner that they made decisions about instructional priorities, novice teachers also had to decide which professional development opportunities were most closely aligned with their needs. Dana described how she made some choices about the district trainings that she attended, based on her content area assignment for the year. She realized that it was important for her to prioritize her professional development activities to best meet her immediate academic goals. Tara also explained that as part of the mentoring program, twice monthly observations and post-observation meetings were required between mentors and novices. She realized that teacher participation in this required activity was met with varied levels of effort and enthusiasm. She said:

Just to put it point blank, I've got mentors that do it to the tee, they turn it in very timely and they're detailed and then some I have to go, 'where is it, where is it?' and you can tell they filled it out in like five minutes.

Furthermore, the schoolwide training that focused on the book Teach with Your Strengths was incorporated through the year during staff meetings and planning time and tried to get teachers to think about their own strengths with respect to the whole school culture. She explained:

Some people did [take it seriously], some people looked at it as another requirement. I thought it was awesome and I kind of wish we did more with it, not more as far as, like, lectures in the staff meeting, but promoting that around the school. I kind of felt like it started off good and we did not really do a whole lot with it other than talked about it in a staff meeting.

Tara presented further evidence about the lack of impact that this type of initiative had on staff members and the school culture as a whole by saying, "Whether the strengths we have or not, you know, I mean, we were encouraged to sit with our team and to look at what your other team members have, but I don't really see it changed anything in the school, I think we're still the same old school". It appeared that while Debbie had good intentions and the activities seemed to have merit, the teachers at Smith were not always willing to embrace the initiatives that she felt were important. The challenge was to find a balance between what the principal thought would stimulate professional growth, and what teachers would be open to experience.

Teacher Traits

As displayed in the graphic in Figure 4, teacher traits served as the foundation for school micropolitics at Smith. Because individuals enter the education profession with unique characteristics and varied background experiences, their distinct traits have a central role to play in the novice experience as a teacher. The theme of teacher traits encompasses the self-identity, motivations, and moral influences experienced by individuals in the initial years as a teacher. This theme is compounded by the interplay of those personal traits with the organizational culture and interaction with others in the school, thus contributing to the overall micropolitics of the school.

Professional Self-identity

Novice teachers come to schools with a wide range of experiences and understandings about themselves and about the profession. Teacher beliefs and schemas are developed over a lifetime of learning, observing, and interacting both in and out of schools (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002b; Rust, 1994), which largely defines a teachers' professional self and his or her subjective educational theory. Beginning teachers lack "useful understandings of the contexts in which they would work...and consistent, grounded, and accurate understandings of themselves as teachers" (Bullough, Knowles, and Crow, 1989, p. 231).

In the current state of public education, novice teachers at Smith entered the profession through many and varied routes, some receiving non-traditional forms of training, and coming into the field after being in another career for several years. Tara shared her perspective on the differences between teachers from varied backgrounds.

Somebody who maybe has been in the corporate world for ten or twenty years, they do approach the job differently. Even if they were a stay home mom let's say and then came in older, their needs are still different, even though they may have gone through a traditional program. So it really comes down to the individual, but yes, I tend to see that those who came from the traditional method, straight through college, for one they're typically younger, most of them, but not all, are female and they want to know more about how they can really meet the needs of these kids. They're more kid-sensitive, they're thinking about the behaviors, but they feel alright with the academics. But they want to get the feelings, where a career switcher I don't see that as much, they're, like, 'okay, what's my curriculum, what do I teach?' Maybe I just see this because I teach elementary, maybe it's different in the high school, I don't know, but they're like, 'give me my curriculum, just give me my job and let me go'.

Kagan (1992) asserted that the self-image of a novice teacher may be strongly linked to their perception of self as a learner, using their own school experiences as the basis for their instructional choices, and operating under the assumption that their students possess similar learning styles, aptitudes, interests and problems as their own. Defined as "front stage behaviors", these are observable teaching activities that individuals have witnessed and internalized throughout their own experiences as students in schools and classrooms, contributing to the way teachers formulate their own instructional practices as they recall their own public school upbringing (Lortie, 1975; Schempp, 1989). The variability in teachers routes to enter the profession are important because the effects of well-prepared

teachers on student achievement can be stronger than the influences of student background factors, such as poverty, language, and minority status (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

The teachers in the study also spoke about the power they felt they had over decisions about where and when to enter the profession. Several teachers talked about their life choices and the balance between being married, raising a family, and moving around.

Mary said:

I had a choice when I went back to work, to work in a school like where my children go to school, which is on the more affluent side definitely and those kids definitely have a different life than these kids here have. I don't think it would be as rewarding to work there and I could be wrong about that because I haven't done it, but I think it's more rewarding to be in a school like this where you actually can hopefully make a difference to somebody, just because of the home life that a lot of the kids have.

Mary's perspective is largely colored by her own personal experiences with schools that her children attend and her understanding of the role teachers can play in the lives of children. Alex also became a teacher after raising her own children and moving for her spouse's job; she recalled that she was even hesitant to move from an assistant position to a teaching position at Smith because she was unsure of her skills.

Teacher hiring and placement was an important administrative task that had a great impact on the micropolitics of the school and on the novice teachers who were seeking a teaching position. Erwin's subjective theory describes the patterns of staff hiring policies in which schools select teachers on the basis of knowing who you are and where you come from (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002). It is important to seek a match between an

individual's personal and educational philosophy and the desired professional expectations for the school. Principals, like Debbie, who take these important personal factors into consideration are better served in the long run because attention to teacher strengths and specific needs within teacher teams can influence the workings of the entire school. Ingersoll (2003a) would agree with the strategy of making meaningful hiring decisions because while treating workers as interchangeable, expendable, low-skill workers may cut some costs, there can be larger implications for the micropolitics and culture of a school.

For many of the teachers, they expressed that teaching was a calling that they either knew they wanted to pursue early on in their adult life, or for others, it was a pull that they felt after being in another professional field. Isabelle and Karen became teachers because it was a passion that they wanted to explore, while Casey shared that his own personal experiences as a student influenced his career choice.

Growing up I had various medical problems so I started school at a very young age going to a special needs school in the hopes that I'd be able to eventually attend mainstream school. Because of the different teachers and other people impacting my life from a young age, as I got older I decided that I wanted to have that kind of impact on other children as well, so that's why I decided to go into the teaching field.

Because teachers and administrators, like many professionals, make career decisions that are influenced by past experiences, the schema that they develop can have an impact on the micropolitics of a school.

Some of the teachers also discussed the fact that had moved from out of the area to begin the job at Smith. With the dismal fiscal state of school districts, teaching positions

were being cut and jobs were hard to come by. Those who were willing and able to move for a job may have had better luck entering the first stage of their career, but for many, moving introduced another dimension to an already stressful experience. By quickly making connections with their mentor or with other colleagues, these novice teachers explained that the transition was made a little easier.

The notion that beginning teachers lack "useful understandings of the contexts in which they would work...and consistent, grounded, and accurate understandings of themselves as teachers" (Bullough, Knowles, and Crow, 1989, p.231) was largely unfounded in this case study. Novice teachers at Smith Elementary School had a firm grasp on who they were as teachers and as individuals, and they used that schema to help them interpret and navigate the micropolitics of the school as they went through their first year.

Understanding and adapting to the organizational forces in schools can be quite distinct from learning to teach children in classrooms (Kuzmic, 1994; Rust, 1994; Schempp, Sparkes & Templin, 1993). Novice teachers at Smith may not have started with a full understanding of Smith's micropolitical forces, including administrative roles, instructional pressures, and demands for conformity, but they quickly became aware of the various directions they would be pulled. The teachers at Smith were challenged to navigate the many requirements and responsibilities that were placed on them, often with little support or guidance. Teachers in the study consistently expressed that they would come into school very early and stay at school into the evening hours on many days in order to accomplish all that the job entailed. Over time, they figured out organizational strategies that would work for them, and relied on colleagues to guide them so that their workload was more manageable.

For some teachers, it was a strong personal belief about where their priorities stood that helped them to make decisions about their work life. Rebecca described her place in life and her effort to keep her home and school lives separate.

Because of the state of life I'm in, I'm married, I have two children and my time for them is when I'm with them and my time when I'm at school is when I'm here. So I try not to cross the lines between school and home. Occasionally, there are cases where I will have to bring some things home, but I make sure that I do it when it's not interfering with family time, but I keep it very minimal. During weekends I'm not doing any work from school at all.

The balance described by Rebecca was something that many teachers strived for, but one that novice teachers had a challenge in achieving. At the start of the career, many beginners, and especially those who are in their first job after college, struggled to handle the myriad of demands that were placed on them at school and still find time and energy to complete all of their responsibilities outside of school. Rebecca credited her ability to handle the many demands of teaching to the fact that she was an out-of-classroom teacher who did not share the same type of responsibilities as a classroom teacher. This factor has a great impact on the differential experiences that teachers at Smith had. Karen admired teachers who could attain that work-life balance, but was mystified as to how they could manage.

I don't know how people do it that have families or that are going to school at night.

There are some teachers that are going to night classes and they are married with kids, and I'm not married and I don't have any kids, and I'm doing my school over the summer. I can barely take care of myself now, that I have no idea how they're

doing it. That and how I'm not going to be burnt out. Teachers that have been teaching for twenty-five, thirty years, I cannot imagine how they're not burnt out by year fifteen.

The despair Karen expressed about the long-term prospect of staying in the teaching profession were likely shared by many novice teachers. Kelchtermans (1993) determined that over time, teachers cultivate their professional self, a personal conception of themselves as a teacher, and their subjective educational theory, a personal system of knowledge and beliefs about the job.

Novice teachers also have a sense of vulnerability early in their career. As Karen described the challenging situation in which she and a parent were butting heads over meeting the child's academic needs, she expressed how vulnerable she felt as a new and inexperienced teacher.

The barrier that she [the parent] has had with me, it started on the back to school night. I said, 'I'm so excited to be in first grade and it's my first year teaching' and she goes, 'hm', so she set up that uneasy feeling that I had about it. I'm a first year teacher, so I'm super nervous about interacting with parents already, and she's just, we've been butting heads about, I guess my validity. That's about how it's been most of the year, she always lashed out at me and, 'this is what you're not doing right and oh, I work in the county, so this is what you're not doing right'. She just made me feel like it was a judgment of my character, that I was not doing a well enough job, that I was not a great person. She made me feel really bad about being here and working with her child and so that was a huge barrier and it put me in tears a couple of days.

The school principal could have easily provided emotional support and professional advice to guide Karen through this extended problem. The effects of such concentrated support would have likely made a positive difference in Karen's initial teaching experience.

Moral Influence

School principals are largely responsible for bringing instructional leadership and overall management to schools, and through those two important roles, they inevitably exercise moral leadership in their schools. Debbie described her personal vision for Smith Elementary School, which was based on her own values and morals, and then explained the importance of gaining buy-in for that vision.

My intent is that every child that comes to this school is going to get the best possible education that they can get, regardless of who they are or where they came from and what challenges they have to overcome. We're going to work with them, find their strengths, teach those, find their weaknesses and build them into strengths. But for the paper part of the vision and all that, if you want buy in, I learned when I was a school counselor that the more people have an ownership of it and the more they're able to put in what they think their needs are, then the more they'll work for that.

The strong moral stance that Debbie consistently expressed through her words in the interviews attested to the fact that she believed in a student-centered vision for Smith.

Although Blase & Anderson (1995) asserted that teachers often align their personal and professional beliefs to the expectations that are explicitly and implicitly communicated by principals, at Smith, it was not clear how invested teachers were in the vision put forth by Debbie. I think that most of the teachers at Smith had a strong allegiance to the core

values of public education, and strived to provide equitable academic opportunities for the diverse group of learners that were in their classrooms. Based on the conversations with the novice teachers in the study, it was unclear whether teachers had wholly developed these philosophies based on the messages being conveyed from their principal, or, more likely, they had developed belief systems throughout their individual educational experiences.

A principal's moral orientation impacts the daily occurrences in a school and can shape the micropolitical stand of a school, for better or for the worse. Furthermore, Debbie's actions and decisions at Smith did not necessarily align with the verbal message she communicated to me. While there was one year in which the strengths-based approach to leadership was promoted among the staff, there were mixed reviews on how well that effort reflected the genuine vision and culture at Smith. Other than that example, it did not appear that Debbie had made explicit efforts to share her personal and professional values and vision with the staff at Smith, and as a result, teachers had a hard time buying in to a philosophy that was on paper or verbally spoken, but never truly acted upon. Teachers can see through inauthenticity, and it seemed that the novice teachers at Smith did not feel a strong tie to Debbie's vision because it had not been promoted in a collaborative and genuine way. One way for administrators to implore teachers to think about and discuss the school's vision and goals is through describes professional development activities, in which teachers are gaining knowledge and skills related to teaching, but there is also an undercurrent of moral, emotional, and political ideals running through the experience (Hargreaves, 1995).

By enacting a moral imperative, principals must pay attention to teachers' socio-emotional and moral concerns so that they may better understand their interpersonal relations (Greenfield, 1991). When principals take into consideration the daily lives, challenges, pressures, and frustrations of teachers, and learn how to react with sensitivity, they can bridge some of the gaps that exist. Debbie contested that she made an effort to get to know teachers on a personal level so that she could connect with them and build relationships that involved open communication, but teachers had conflicting opinions about her concern for their personal and professional welfare. In one account of a conversation with a first year teacher, Debbie shared her moral reasoning for being an educator.

I said, 'only you can decide whether you need to make a change, but the other thing you've got to ask yourself is at the end of your lifetime are you going to be able to look back at your life with a feeling of accomplishment or a feeling of, I did not really do anything much' and I said, 'you hang at this long enough and you get good at it and we'll do our best to help you get good at it, but you can definitely say I made a difference'... and I believe that about education.

Although Greenfield (1991) contended that a "moral commitment overrides bureaucratic mandates or directives and influences how teachers and principals carry out their beliefs," (p. 169), if teachers doubt the authenticity of those messages and the efforts that go along with the message, then they are not likely to be invested in the school culture and school goals. Moral influence can be powerful if teachers recognize a meaningful connection between their own values and those held by the principal, but in the case at Smith, a

negative micropolitical climate had developed as Debbie enacted mismatched goals and actions over the years.

It was more likely that the culture at Smith was driven by compliance theory, which was described by Etzioni (1961) as the use of administrative power to promote teachers' moral involvement, encouraging their compliance with school norms based on their connection to the ideals of the organization. At Smith Elementary School, novice teachers felt compelled to use data and assessments as a driving force in their instructional decision-making. Since teachers had an inherent desire to see students succeed, Debbie appealed to their implicit motivation as a way to steer them toward instructional methods that would align well with the district and school data-driven initiatives. The moral connection that teachers were implored to make could have important consequences for the school and its students, but it appears that the goals of data-driven instruction were not fully adopted because teachers were skeptical of the intentions and the purpose. Many of the novice teachers in the study contended that they had strong sensibilities about how to best meet the needs of their students and to differentiate the instruction, without becoming so bound to data-driven methods.

The true testament to a teacher's drive to succeed was embedded in the stories they told about the victorious moments they had with their students. Karen will likely never forget her first year at Smith, which was filled with the challenge of a particular parent. Despite the bumpy road, Karen still remained true to her moral understanding of the family's situation and she made decisions that reflected her personal vision of her role as a teacher.

I know that there were struggles at home, the living situation and they're a low socio-economic family, single mother, I think they lost their home, she's got a lot on her plate with working and a child that's struggling. So I understand that and I tried to make it so that she knew that I understand where she was coming from, and that it's a frustrating thing to have a child or a student, on both my side and her side, that's not making any progress, so I tried. I tried so hard, let's work together because I'd been telling her from day one, butting heads is not benefiting the student. Working together we would make a great team, to work together and bring our strengths, you're the strength at home, I'm the strength at school, we work together and it will help him. So I think she just broke into tears, she had that major breaking point and I was like, yay! (laughs).

Other teachers like Dana and Alex shared examples of their successes with students in their classrooms, and the great impact that had on them as developing teachers who needed to remain connected to their purpose and their goals for being part of the public education system. Dana expressed her pride in helping students to access challenging academic content by using varied instructional strategies and Alex described the amazement at the range of progress that could be seen in her students from the beginning to the end of the kindergarten year. Alex captured her experience, saying, "It's so satisfying to know that they know so much now and it's not in spite of me, it's because of me (laughs). So, I've helped them learn to read and write and it just blows my mind". Mary also explained her moral imperative for entering the profession.

When I got out of business and decided to go into teaching it was because I wanted to do something where I felt like I was actually doing something that was

important, making a difference. Not to sound corny, but in the business world you kind of feel like you're just a fish in the pond and there's a million other people that can do what you're doing and so I wanted to do something where I thought personally I would be a little more rewarded for my work. I can say that's true, it's really about the kids and hoping that you're making a difference, trying to help at least one of them, especially in a school like this.

Those connections helped novice teachers at Smith to balance the triumphant moments with the pressures and demands of being a teacher and gave them motivation for future success and ultimately influenced their decision to remain in the profession.

Teacher Motivation

Much as personal moral imperatives drive teacher actions and decision-making, Kelchtermans (1993) asserted that a teacher's motivations can also influence their desire to leave or remain in the profession. Extensive research has been conducted to determine which factors have an effect on teacher retention in schools. Some of the non-pecuniary factors that were involved in teacher satisfaction, or lack thereof, included leadership practices, availability of support, involvement in decision-making, and opportunities to exercise professional autonomy (Bentzen, 1974; Chapman, 1983; Chapman & Hutcheson, 1982; Goodlad, 1984; Rosenholtz, 1989). Debbie described her perception that in the absence of other factors, such as parent involvement, teachers were motivated by the achievement of their students.

I think it takes very little for them to [feel appreciated], they're not expecting a whole lot from the parents, but I think just that simple thank you, that recognition that they are working with the kids, that they are doing something is motivating for

them. Well, like, the other day when we got fifth grade reading [scores] and they cannot wait, the teachers, you talk about people who want to see scores, it's the teachers. I know one teacher looked and out of her homeroom she only had one child that did not pass and just, the look on her face, the feeling of accomplishment because she really thought she was going down (laughs) and she was just so ecstatic because it was like, 'yes, they did it! I managed to get them to do it'. So it's a struggle, but when you're successful after you've really had a hard struggle, boy, does it really make you feel good. But I think more importantly and what I tell the teachers is this, that the kids that you have, you have to work really hard here for them to be successful and so if you went into teaching to make a difference, this is a school where you can really make a difference. It's not a school where the kids come to kindergarten already knowing their ABCs and all their sight words and how to add and subtract, basic math. You're going to have to teach them that and at the end of the school year, when you look back at where your kids were and where you've brought them, you can know that you have been a teacher, you have done what the profession is there for and so I think, in many cases a lot of it is intrinsic.

While it is probably true that positive student achievement is a motivating factor for teachers, it appeared that Debbie overestimated the power that student improvement and success helped teachers to feel an overall sense of satisfaction at Smith.

Hackman and Oldman (1980) contended that when people were given work opportunities that allowed them to grow and develop, to perfect skills and learn new ones, experience challenges, they tended to make progress and feel a sense of personal accomplishment. Teachers at Smith would have probably been more motivated by being

involved in instructional and collegial activities of their own design and involvement, and which could meet their own professional needs as well as the academic needs of their students.

Teachers in the study commented that being autonomous about the academic instruction in their own classrooms was important to them. Without a sense of ownership over their curriculum and learning activities, teachers felt that they were not able to exercise their professionalism in the ways they were taught to do in their preparation programs. Casey simplified the lack of professional freedom, stating, “It’s more or less lots of times, feeling like, we’re sneaking it in so to speak when we can, because everything is so data-driven”. Dana described an instance where she thought she would be reprimanded for having her students complete a science activity outdoors and others contended that there was a pressure to conform to data-driven practices with a disregard for individual and developmental student needs. Dana even recalled an instance where she felt minimized as a teacher.

I found something very disheartening. I had made this soil flipbook and I thought it was interesting and they had the picture then they wrote facts on the other side.

My principal came in and she told me that it was a waste of time and they should've written it in their notebooks. I was trying to get them a little more excited, and we never do stuff like that (laughs), so to hear that they were supposed to write it in their notebook I was a little more, I was a little disappointed.

Those scenarios were very troubling for the teachers at Smith, and created a tension between them and the school administration because of the clash in ideologies that existed.

The interrelated nature of the novice teacher's personal and professional lives can have an effect on one's self esteem and job motivation. At times, beginning teachers recognize discrepancies between their own philosophies and impetus for teaching and the dominant culture in the school (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002b). Beyond the personal and professional pulls that teachers feel, they are also negatively affected by physical and mental demands of the job, which can often serve as de-motivators. Tara explained that many teachers at Smith were motivated by fear; they worried about job security and they truly wanted to gain experience and make a difference for their students, so they decided to stay at the school.

The teachers stay, because they have friends here. Also some teachers, and I know first year teachers have felt this way, they don't want to just go for a year and then leave. They want to try to stick it out and also it's harder to transfer when you're in your first three years, since you don't have tenure. You're also more afraid to say anything, because you don't have tenure and they like the kids here, they want to make a difference, it's the reason they probably got into teaching was to make a difference.

Alex also commented that she loved the challenges the job brought, but that the stresses may have outweighed the benefits for her, saying, "As much as I'd love to say that these children are learning because of me instead of in spite of me (laughs), I don't see myself being here much longer. I love it, it's action-packed, it's full-circle, but right now I'm so stressed". Casey concurred with Alex, saying:

Granted I'm still fairly young and this is only my second year, but with all the stress and stuff I don't see myself doing this. If it stays like this or if I find out that in

general education's going like this across the board, I don't see myself as staying in the profession long-term. On a personal note, since I have been teaching, I used to not have many health problems, but I've actually been put on blood pressure medication since starting this, anti-depressants, lost fifteen pounds in two weeks last year, from just not eating from the stress. So it's just everything and it's not worth taking a toll on the body for. The change is big since I was going through school and student teaching to what it is now.

Casey's description of his health problems exemplified the toll that the stress of being a novice teacher can have on an individual. For the most part, the novice teachers were discontent in their state of being at Smith Elementary School. They cared deeply about their students and the values of teaching, but they were already thinking about alternate career choices.

The experiential aspect of micropolitical literacy relates to the degree of satisfaction a teacher feels about his or her place in the school and is also associated with the range of emotions felt by teachers as they navigate the micropolitical environment. The micropolitical environment at Smith had an important role to play in their displeasure, as there were not enough motivational factors to keep them happy at the school.

Praxis Shock

The term "praxis shock" refers to the notion that teachers are confronted with the realities of being a classroom teacher, and those experiences either challenge or confirm their ideologies about teaching (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002b). Teachers at Smith were faced with challenges from the start, as many were hired just before the start of school or

even after the school year had begun. Tara explained the effect that late hiring can have on a new teacher.

Sometimes my heart goes out to the new teacher, because we've all been a new teacher at some point. There are a lot of programs that do get placed on you and in being a first year teacher, you're still trying to figure out, 'okay, how am I handling homework and how am I setting up the room?' and all that at the beginning of the year when everyone else is starting these new programs, so it is tough. Being a new teacher and, you know, I try to not put any additional tasks on them, I try to find things that are going to help them.

Juggling many new and varied demands posed a challenge for novice teachers at Smith and made their early experiences difficult. Mary also shared her unique experience of being hired in November.

By the first week in November, I was the third teacher that they had already that year. I was called on a Friday night and asked if I could start on Monday (laughs), so it was very quick. I had been looking for a job, but still, I wasn't prepared to start that quickly. So my first year was very difficult, just because I did not get to start off at the beginning of the year and I had this class that had been moved around and I think that was difficult for them also. Not being able to go through all the proper training and initial things that you have to go through as a teacher, I just got thrown in and kind of had to do that along the way. It was very difficult my first year.

As if being a new teacher is not difficult enough, those who begin after the school year has started experience a different set of challenges that often go unaddressed by school administrators. At Smith, Debbie was cognizant of the need for new teachers to have time

to set up their classroom and get their bearings before being faced with a group of eager students. Tara explained how the mentoring program served to support teachers in this position.

Holding on really tight, that's how it works. We had two teachers this year who came in later and it's very difficult on them. They miss all that first training, they miss all that orientation. I try really hard to catch them up, but at the same time you don't want to give them too much because right now they're worried, like, my kids are coming tomorrow.

Tara's realistic approach seemed to take the teachers' needs into consideration. Casey also described how Debbie offered support after he accepted the position at Smith.

As a new teacher, it was fairly scary at first because I moved down here from upstate New York and I was actually hired at 4:30 on a Friday afternoon and when I asked when I needed to start, I had to be here for 8:00 the following Monday morning. So that was basically pick up and move in a couple of days. Granted, I expressed my concern to the principal and she did leave me with her cell phone number and stuff, in case I had anything come up over the weekend or needed anything, said give her a call and she'd do what she could to help me.

Despite those types of support offered by the principal, teachers still had apprehensions and concerns as they transitioned into their new role. Since the issue of late hiring was prevalent for teachers at Smith, it was the principal's responsibility to ensure that structures and supports were in place that could help to ease the challenging transition for novice teachers.

Throughout the school year, it becomes clear to many first year teachers that they are unprepared for the realities and demands of the job. In many cases, new teachers fail to prepare for the backstage behaviors of teaching, which involve the balance of myriad daily demands, classroom management, the planning needed to make learning possible, and the networking required to develop support systems for survival in schools (Rust, 1994). Teachers at Smith seemed to have realistic expectations about the workload and the demands of the job, and many were willing to go above and beyond to get the job done. Their willingness to work hard, however, did not preclude them from feeling frustrated and stressed on a regular basis. As discussed in another section, the lack of collegiality and isolation many new teachers felt was unexpected and difficult to work around. There was also a conflict between the theoretical knowledge novice teachers brought to the school and the practices endorsed within the school (Good & Brophy, 2008). The push for data-driven practices at Smith was a recurring issue for teachers and one that was repeatedly mentioned during the study. Debbie explained how teachers at Smith could be traumatized by their initial experience.

A few years back I had seven or eight first year teachers in this building and I think by the end of October most of them were crying. They all had mentors that were working with them, but one of them, she was working late at night, like 9:00 at night here and then she's working all weekend. She said, 'I look at my friends that I went to college with, they've got jobs in other professions and they're out playing on the weekend and at night and they're making more money and I think, what's wrong with me?'

Debbie's anecdote simplified the issues that beginning teachers at Smith faced; from her perspective, their problems can be solved simply by an attitude shift, but for teachers who were living that experience, they are looking for more than a motivational speech.

As Blase (1997) asserted, the fact that teacher education programs have virtually ignored the micropolitics of teaching in their preparation courses and fieldwork is problematic because now there is a cadre of novice teachers that may have been exposed to the cultural and social dimensions of teaching, but are lacking in a general knowledge about the explicit and implicit ways that business is done in schools.

Teacher Retention at Smith Elementary School

Since teacher retention is one of the central foci for this study, it was important to get a sense from the study participants about their perceptions of the issue at Smith Elementary School. When asked about the teacher turnover at the school, the principal explained:

I think we have a pretty good [retention] record. I've got some grade levels that, like my kindergarten grade level hasn't, I've lost one person in the last several years and the reason that we lost her was she had an opportunity to teach in Germany and same thing for first and third grade. Our folks usually retire out of here or husbands' jobs get moved out and they move, of course, with their husband. Every once in a while, about every other year or so I'll have somebody I've recommended for non-renewal, but when I have several teachers leave for other than husbands getting transferred or retirement, it usually is when gasoline goes up.

Debbie also went on to describe the impact that teacher turnover could have on the school. She estimated that about \$10,000 was spent on teacher supports that year, which she felt

was less costly than hiring new teachers. She also stressed that turnover has an effect on the "social fabric of the school", explaining that different people bring different things to the school socially and losing people changes that social fabric.

There was one novice teacher in the study who had already made the decision to leave the school for another school in the same district for the following year. Rebecca described the transfer process and the fact that she had previously been an aide at the school and had waited for a position to open up for her. She said:

We had to put in our request by January and then the transfer season opened in March or April. I think that is when they actively started doing the transfers, so in the end after a lot of thought and conversation I decided that I would go back to Lewis School.

As she continued talking about leaving the school, I asked if there was one thing that would make her leave the profession altogether, Rebecca explained:

If I was a classroom teacher, I don't think I would be able to last that long. I'm in there in inclusion and I'm not the main content teacher, but I am there providing support to the ESL students and it could be very draining and I could see just a burnout. Just being burnt out with what I'm doing being a reason for me to just step back and kind of reevaluate where I should be in my life. As an ESOL teacher, I don't have the brunt of all that, keeping up grade books and grading papers for all these different classes. I'm really more specialized in what I'm doing, so I think it's better for me just because it gives me a renewed attitude going in every day and I'm not so burnt out. I enjoy what I'm doing and I enjoy the kids and seeing them grow.

Her response was interesting and makes one consider the fact that the roles and responsibilities of classroom and support teachers can vary so widely that this presented an entirely different professional experience.

When asked to discuss their future career goals, whether in or out of the field of education, teachers shared some interesting insights. Mary and Isabelle seemed content with the current state of their careers. Mary stated:

In the immediate future I will be here I assume (laughs). I thought about maybe going to middle school at some point. I can only go up to sixth grade, that's all I'm certified to go to and I think long-term I would like to do something where I can work with more of a small group instead of a whole classroom. I would really like to be able to pull the kids that really need the help and work with them one-on-one.

Mary's goal to remain in the education profession was similar to Isabelle, who went on to explain her future plans.

I also don't plan on going anywhere in the very near future at least. I plan on going and doing my masters next year, which means I'll probably be here at least as long as it takes me to do that because I don't want to pile on too much. I think that I'll definitely stay in elementary grades.

For some new teachers, it was enough just to get through their first year. Karen expressed her feeling that "I think that my next year will be my best year. I'm excited to start next year because I know it's going to be better than it was this year". Since she student taught in first grade, Karen described her feelings.

[I felt] really lucky to get the first grade spot here. I'm sure I will want to teach something else later on, but I just cannot imagine (laughs) teaching a different

grade right now. If I ever moved I would like to go to second, but not for a while (laughs).

When probed to think about whether it was the comfort level with being in a particular grade, she went further to explain "Well, and in this school, it's not just in the grade level, it's comfortable in the school and the dynamics of the school and how the school works before you move". Her point is well taken because she expressed that becoming acculturated into the school was an important step in becoming comfortable in the career.

When asked about whether, when she entered the profession, she viewed teaching as a long-term career choice, Alex said, "You know, I did not really think about it, I guess. I can see myself doing it for maybe two or three more years, and everybody laughs because they know I love it...but holy moly, it is way too stressful". Casey felt equally conflicted, describing how his health issues would cause him to exit the profession if the stress and pressure got to be too much. For the most part, the novice teachers in the study expressed the opinion that they would likely stay at Smith for another few years, to gain experience and to become grounded in the instructional practices for elementary grades. They thought that having a few years of experience at the same school would benefit them in the long run if they wanted to move schools. For most, the desire to stay was based on personal factors, such as career goals and individual relationships that had developed, and much less about the school and the administrative support. In fact, several of the teachers noted that they would like to find a more supportive and collegial school environment in their next move.

Several of the teachers also mentioned that they were either in graduate school or planning to start working on their master's degree, so it is clear that they are interested in

expanding their knowledge base and furthering their career within education. Through professional development activities and practical experiences in school settings, as well as interactions with school leaders, colleagues, parents, family and friends, teachers gain insight about the nature of schools and the role they expect to have within particular schools and the system as a whole.

Other teachers explained that they would like to find a school that better suited their needs and their expectations. Rebecca described her decision to leave Smith and go to Lewis Elementary School, stating:

When I left that school [initially], I left behind a lot of wonderful people that I knew there and just through conversation, I was told that if anything ever comes up, just keep your eyes open and put a request in. So when the transfer season opened, I had that in mind, that I was going to put a request to transfer back if something did open and so when I interviewed and I was offered the position I was actually kind of torn. I did not really know if I should stay where I am, because I was learning a lot, I am learning a lot with just different programs and it was my first year, so it was a difficult decision.

In the short-term, Dana mentioned that she would likely stay at the school another year but would probably leave after that. She had such a good, supportive school for student teaching and wanted to find another school like that.

Still, others could not imagine teaching as a long-term career. Karen explained that she doesn't understand how teachers don't get burnout out after decades of teaching. Dana also expressed her disbelief that teachers could balance the demands of a family and their

professional duties. Dana explained how she would like to make a career move that would help her find a balance in the future.

That is not the life I want to live. I actually thought, but I know it's a lot less money, I'd like to get into some kind of non-profit organization, so eventually, maybe after like ten years or so, being the head of some non-profit organization that has to do with children and education, but definitely getting out of here.

In thinking about alternative career paths they may venture down, responses ranged but most of the teachers showed an interest in continuing to work within the education field. Rebecca shared her goals.

I'm actually very interested in possibly being a reading specialist, just because I work in language arts so much and I really enjoy it, so it's something I would consider pursuing down the road as my kids get a little bit older and I have more time (laughs).

Rebecca's career aspirations were to remain in the field of education, while Karen mentioned her future goals.

I've actually been thinking about that a lot recently and it's been such a stressful year. I love teaching and it's everything that I've hoped it would be, but I've actually thought about, I am continuing my education now, but after ten or so years, thinking about teaching university.

The uncertainty among these teachers about their long-term plans for remaining in teaching is a concern, both for the future of Smith Elementary School, and for the profession as a whole. If novice teachers are entering the field with unease, it is clear that the retention issues facing public schools are not going to improve.

Summary

The rich description that has been offered through this chapter provided evidence that teachers and the principal at Smith Elementary School had strong feelings about their selected career in education and about their position at Smith. Each individual possessed a personal and professional belief system that shaped their subsequent experiences, which in turn had an important impact on the overall school culture, events, actions, and decisions that occurred at the school. This chapter has described the interrelated nature of these events, actions, and decisions, and through the application of micropolitical theory to the qualitative data, intended to provide readers with a better understanding of the outcomes at Smith Elementary School.

Throughout this chapter, extensive examples were presented to describe how the micropolitics at Smith Elementary School were occurring. There was ample evidence to demonstrate the ways in which this complex set of actions and interactions were at times working for, and most times working against, one another to create a culture that did not wholly support novice teachers. The unconstructive events and actions tipped the balance in the direction of negative micropolitics, indicating that the principal directly or indirectly enacted certain practices that affected teachers in adverse ways. Furthermore, those actions that could be conceived as positive micropolitics were not operating to their full potential to ensure that teachers had an affirmative experience as they began teaching at Smith. The common theme throughout this chapter revolved around the fact that the principal had choices to make about how the school was run and the priorities that drove her decisions and actions were not always consistent with the needs of the teachers and the students at Smith. This inconsistency brought novice teachers, in their short tenure at Smith, to the

point that they were discouraged and defeated by the state of the school and of their future as teachers.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to investigate the retention and attrition patterns in one elementary school, as influenced by the micropolitics of that school; in particular, principal decision-making processes, leadership activities, and the relationship between principal and teachers were studied. Through the findings presented in Chapter IV, three central research questions were evaluated to demonstrate how micropolitics were evidenced in the school:

- 1) How do principals make important decisions about the events and structures for novice teachers at their schools?
- 2) How do teachers perceive the role of the principal in their schools?
- 3) What influence do the micropolitics between principals and teachers have on the retention of novice teachers?

A case study design was used to describe the context of Smith Elementary School while concentrating on the phenomenon of teacher retention. The context of this elementary school was rich in events and perspectives, which led to a thick description that allowed me to explore the micropolitics of the school and create meaning and understanding for myself and for readers. In this chapter, the research questions will be further addressed to illustrate how practice, policy, and research are impacted by school micropolitics and the issue of teacher retention.

By assessing the principal's role in making particular decisions about school structures and activities aimed at supporting novice teachers, researchers and practitioners

are presented with a case study that offered a connection between specific school-based decisions and the retention of teachers. The graphic displayed in Figure 4 served as the cornerstone for the discussion about the micropolitical state at Smith Elementary School as it demonstrated that the principal was primarily in control of most aspects of the school, albeit with limited effectiveness. All teachers, but especially novice teachers as assessed in this study, were largely affected by the decisions made by the school principal. Although a few positive micropolitical themes were revealed at Smith, teachers were greatly impacted by the negative themes and experiences at the school. The implications of these decisions on the overall micropolitics of the school, and on the individual teachers at Smith, are discussed in this chapter.

Because this study used a single case to investigate the qualitative nature of the processes and relationships in one school, it is not likely that the data presented here will be generalizable. The intention is that the findings described in Chapter IV and explored further in this chapter will provide a rich description of the micropolitics in one school, which will allow readers to apply lessons learned to their own specific contexts.

The existing research base has generally been centered on the negative aspects of attrition in both elementary and secondary schools. Since I hypothesized that elements of school leadership and micropolitical factors have an influence on novice teachers' perceptions, attitudes, actions, and decisions, I began this study believing it was necessary to evaluate the phenomenon of teacher retention from an assets-based approach. I set out to find examples of effective leadership, collaboration, collegiality, and positive school culture, recognizing that there was more to gain from findings of this nature than to take on a deficit approach to teacher retention. As such, the graphic used to contextualize the

micropolitical findings for the study could be applied to either a positive or a negative school environment and the symbols in each ball would change according to the prevailing experience. Through the course of the study, however, it became apparent that in the selected case, the examples of positive micropolitics were not as plentiful as I had imagined they would be. In fact, it was not a given that a school with average to high retention rates would exemplify positive micropolitics. Furthermore, the opposing viewpoints of the teachers and the principal on many of the same topics led to a description that at times painted a contradictory picture of the school micropolitics.

This study has both theoretical and practical significance for school administrators and teachers, as well as for faculty members in higher education institutions and leaders of other alternative preparation programs. As teachers and principals prepare for their role in the field, it is essential that they be introduced to the notion of school micropolitics. By understanding the events, processes, and interactions that occur in school settings, novice teachers and practicing administrators may be better able to see eye to eye and work toward the collective goal of educating all children. School principals can also learn an important lesson by simply understanding the large degree of control they hold in that role, and how that control can be used in either positive or negative ways to keep all of the school's balls in the air.

Although teacher retention has been studied widely over the past few decades, the issue is still detrimental to our public schools. As this case study has shed some light on the type of micropolitics involved in school leadership, I expect the study's findings have demonstrated why it has been such a challenge to retain teachers in many schools. Despite the fact that the link between negative micropolitics and low levels of teacher retention was

not established through this case study, the extensive body of qualitative data that was gleaned is helpful in understanding school micropolitics and the impact that could be occurring in schools around the nation.

Summary of Findings

Throughout the study's data collection and analysis phases, I noted numerous commonalities among novice teacher perceptions about the micropolitics of the school. I also noted several instances in which teacher perspectives contrasted with the principal's perspective. The nature of these conflicting viewpoints points directly to the hypothesis of this study and one which is depicted graphically in Figure 4; the micropolitical state of a school is largely controlled by the principal and this has an impact on novice teachers. Depending on the type of actions and interactions that a principal employs, the micropolitical state of the school will either see positive or negative effects. In the current case study, the overall negative micropolitical environment at Smith Elementary School exhibited mistaken priorities, fractured relations, and ineffective processes. The principal's decisions and actions permeated the micropolitics of the school, resulting in a cadre of malcontent teachers. Amazingly, this group of dissatisfied teachers was retained at relatively high levels despite the poor micropolitics. This is partially due to the fact that there are various standpoints from which to view the micropolitics of schools. The following statements reflect the key conclusions that can be drawn from the study.

The principal's professional vision for Smith Elementary School was not consistently aligned with the school's practices.

Because a school should be grounded in a strong organizational culture that revolves around the human capital that is available, as depicted in Figure 4, it is the

responsibility of the school principal to create a vision that fosters such thought and action. Leading faculty about beliefs, vision, mission, student work, and student outcomes is a powerful tool for improving teaching and learning with ideas and information being the basic tools needed (Ash & Pearsall, 2000). All other elements of the micropolitical state should then radiate from that vision, creating more buy-in from stakeholders in the short-term and more sustaining power in the long-term. Over time, the micropolitical state of a school will be transformed and the people in the school community will be changed as they enter that environment.

Debbie spoke at length about her ideals for education as a whole, and for the school community at Smith, in particular, but the evidence is lacking from teachers to support the idea that these ideals meaningfully infiltrated her leadership practices. A strong educational leader is one who has developed his or her own credo about education as a system and about his or her role within that system. Through many of her responses to questions about the school culture and community at Smith, Debbie asserted that she believed strongly in ensuring that all students had opportunities to learn and that all teachers were prepared to meet the needs of the diverse group of learners that are in their classrooms. This vision is worthy and vital to student success, however there was little mention of the integral way that teachers must fit into the picture of student achievement, other than the simplistic statements that they will be “world class professionals” who “come prepared” and who “know the curriculum”.

There were several points during the case study when teachers offered contradictory perspectives about Debbie’s vision for the school or when observational evidence proved otherwise. For the most part, teachers were not even privy to Debbie’s

vision for the school. The words that were expressed during the interviews for this case study appeared to be genuine and believable, both to me and to Debbie herself, but if the vision never leaves the main office and never transpires into action, then the words are futile. As Moir & Gless (2001) contended that a school's vision should be communicated through the induction program, teachers at Smith should have had more opportunities to become familiarized with the vision as they participated in their initial induction and mentoring activities.

Furthermore, Debbie's contention that the vision was developed collaboratively and even the fact that the schoolwide vision promoted collaboration by stating, "We will collaborate together and communicate with others in a positive way; at Smith Elementary, education is a team effort," is erroneous. The interview and observational data in the case study did not provide ample evidence that teachers felt a concerted effort to involve them in the development of the school vision, nor did they perceive the school community to be particularly collaborative. Many of the novice teachers involved in the study asserted that the collaboration and collegiality that took place at Smith was not encouraged or supported by the administration, but rather occurred because of teachers taking the initiative to generate their own collegial relationships. As stated by Kardos and colleagues (2001), such collegial practices require the vision and commitment of leaders to create a school culture that supports regular and sustained collaboration among teachers and groups.

Moreover, if Debbie's vision for Smith included an attention to student success, then it would make sense for her to visit classrooms on a regular basis and for the purpose of observing teaching and learning activities. Being in classrooms and making her presence known to both teachers and students, and for positive reasons, would signal that Debbie

valued the instructional activities that were taking place. Angelle (2006) determined that monitoring that uses collaboration and reflection, and in which the principal engages in meaningful interaction with the teacher, is useful and beneficial to new teachers. On the contrary, novice teachers in the study contended that her classroom visits were largely procedural or disciplinary, and on the occasion that a visit was made to observe instruction, it was generally a formal evaluation and did not result in a positive interaction about the instruction that took place in the class. Teachers at Smith asserted that in order to achieve the stated goals and vision of the school, they needed instructional support and guidance. Because this element of leadership was lacking, teachers became frustrated with their own instructional practices and felt that they were unable to properly meet the needs of students in their classrooms.

Dominant school culture, organizational vision and goals, and collective norms are all elements of a school that can be a stabilizing factor in a school's success, serving as a base for which the principal to stand upon. However, the complexity of the micropolitical state at Smith is such that the novice teachers are disheartened by the lack of authentic vision rather than being energized by the vision being carried out at Smith Elementary School. As a result, Debbie was unable to capitalize on the school's history and established practices to further an environment of collective achievement.

The principal and novice teachers at Smith Elementary School had opposing viewpoints about several elements of the school's micropolitical state.

In much the same way that a principal stands on the school's foundation of organizational culture as a way to effectively control the actions and events in the micropolitical environment, the unique composition of the teaching force should be used as

an asset in that environment. As displayed in Figure 4, maximizing teacher traits are integral to the effective leadership of a school. Throughout the case study at Smith, it became evident through her words that Debbie wanted to utilize teachers' strengths for the betterment of the school and its students, however her actions did not always align in ways that allowed teachers to perceive that was a core mission of the school.

The fact that the principal and the teachers at Smith had differing academic priorities posed a big problem for novice teachers as they began their teaching career. When beginning teachers arrived at Smith, they came full of ideas and enthusiasm about teaching a diverse and challenging population of students. They were armed with research-based and innovative techniques that they learned through their teacher preparation programs and could not wait to put their knowledge into practice. The unfortunate reality for many of these novice teachers was that the micropolitical environment at Smith did not greet them with the same level of excitement. This disconnect between the theoretical knowledge of the preparation experience and practices endorsed within the school was problematic for teachers as they attempted to understand their role and navigate the school culture (Good and Brophy, 2008).

For many teachers at Smith, the extensive attention on data-driven practices and on assessment as an ongoing and essential practice in classrooms was overkill. Most of the teachers in the study did acknowledge the value of student data as an instructional tool, but felt that it was often pushed on them at the expense of other worthwhile activities. The sense that I got after talking with teachers and the principal was that data was being used as a control mechanism to ensure that students are being taught and that teachers are doing their jobs. They were not necessarily respected for their professional autonomy, and trusted

to the job they were hired to do. As cited by the Learning First Alliance (2005), the autonomy and shared decision-making that are hallmarks of collaborative leadership tend to be more amenable to teachers than the traditional top-down models of school management.

On the same token, they were also not given adequate support to employ practices that were being promoted at the school. Both scenarios led to teachers feeling alone and unable to succeed in the micropolitical setting at Smith. Teachers also felt minimized by being controlled in this way and also by the lack of support for their efforts to comply with the data-driven expectations. For example, a novice teacher at Smith attempted to adhere to all of the requirements placed on him or her, and in doing so, he or she recognized that there was a need for assistance to meet the demands. In many cases, teachers at Smith felt they were left out on their own to produce student data that was just not realistic or feasible given the challenges and constraints they were under, combined with the lack of support to do so.

Debbie expressed that she saw Smith Elementary School as a place where teachers and administrators collaborated regularly to meet the goals of student success, however it was clear that teachers disagreed with this assessment of the school micropolitics. Novice teachers benefitted from engaging in discussion with their more experienced colleagues in order to learn about the school norms and to adopt effective instructional practices. While novice teachers at Smith did express how important and beneficial their collegial relationships were to their integration into their role at Smith, they did not feel that these relationships or activities were supported or encouraged by the principal. Teachers need opportunities, time, and resources to effectively collaborate with one another and to do so

in meaningful ways. As determined by Darling-Hammond and Berry (1999), excellent teachers can be retained through the restructuring of school and teaching, including a reallocation of personnel and resources so that teachers have time to work intensively with students and collaborate with one another.

Furthermore, the type of collaboration that was desired by teachers differed from that which was seen as successful in Debbie's view. The use of staff meetings and weekly data and grade-level meetings as forums for teacher conversation were simply not enough to encourage teachers to engage in professional learning opportunities and to interact meaningfully with their colleagues about the important issues that were happening in their classrooms. The proper structures for this type of quality communication was absent from the micropolitics of Smith. Since the collegial nature of the micropolitical environment was essentially absent, the lead mentor and principal put a lot of stock into the collaborative mentoring program as a way to increase productive teacher interactions. Despite their optimism about the new and anticipated district mentoring program, the collaborative mentoring approach may not be the silver bullet that is needed to reverse the micropolitical state of the school.

When teachers are shown recognition and appreciation, they feel valued and supported in their role at a school and within the profession. At Smith, Debbie described several initiatives that she had implemented over the past few years, none of which were mentioned by teachers. She also made a few comments about this topic that not only minimized the value of such actions for novice teachers, but also asserted her misunderstanding of what was important to the teachers under her leadership. All of the teachers at Smith were well aware that they selected a profession that may not reap the

financial rewards seen in other careers; they were even realistic about the time and effort their commitment would warrant; but they were not prepared for the reality that they would not be provided with even the simplest acts of verbal recognition to show that they were doing a good job or that they were appreciated. Brock and Grady (2000) reported that new teachers desire interaction and affirmation from their principals, so much that the climate fostered by principals can determine a novice teacher's success or failure. For many novice teachers at Smith, the lack of concern for their needs was a hard pill to swallow as they worked so hard day in and day out.

Conflict and control were prevalent leadership practices at Smith Elementary School.

Several of the teachers mentioned that teachers at the school do not engage in meaningful interactions on a regular basis and that the interactions they generally have with the principal were fraught with tension and conflict. Because the principal is at the center of the juggling act portrayed in Figure 4, holding the control in her hands, she and the teaching staff at Smith expect that this power relationship should be maintained as part of the normative school culture. Several pieces of data were collected that attested to the fact that Debbie approached her leadership role in an authoritative manner and expected that teachers would comply with her directives in the control-oriented micropolitical environment at Smith. Although there were few specific examples of direct conflict between staff members at Smith, there was a prevailing undercurrent of conflict in the micropolitical culture. Teachers felt conflicted about their practices and their educational philosophies and they also felt a pull between instructional best practices for their students and the requirements that were being pushed on them.

As seen through the case study data, novice teachers at Smith were quick to reply that Debbie was more of a school manager than an instructional leader. Control that is exerted through formalized structures and policy enforcement tended to be less desirable and effective from the teachers' perspective (Ball, 1987). While they asserted that they believed she was doing a good job with many of the procedural tasks associated with running the school, they felt she was less successful in the area of instructional support. As mentioned in the discussion of a principal's juggling act, various scenarios can result, with one or several balls falling, leaving the principal with less control, much as was the case with Debbie. Her inability to maintain control of all aspects of the school building and the people in it became apparent as teachers revealed their perspective of her leadership shortcomings.

Blase and Anderson's (1995) research on the micropolitics of schools centered on the contention that principals seek to control teachers, through strategies that range from open and directive to diplomatic and subtle. The fact that Debbie leaned toward the more systematic behaviors and actions that supported school functioning indicated that she felt a greater sense of control over these areas. Furthermore, her personality characteristics were widely referenced by teachers as they discussed her leadership style. As a seasoned administrator and educator, Debbie may have come from a traditional schooling experience in which authoritative leadership was the norm. Traditionally, principals have been control-oriented and have used a range of direct, overt, and even blatant strategies as well as indirect and subtle strategies to manage teachers (Blase & Blase, 2002). As part of the "old school" approach to school leadership, she may simply be aligning her practices with what she knows, has seen, and what is familiar to her.

As part of her administrative activities, Debbie used teacher evaluations as a tool for managing teachers. While she asserted that the new evaluation system was an effective method for looking at teachers' behavior and skills with respect to their classroom outcomes, teachers felt that this bureaucratic mechanism was another example of control and confirmation of the hierarchical relations between principal and teacher. Ingersoll (2003) asserted that through the organizational nature of schools, administrators are able to maintain control over teachers in a hierarchical system. While the evaluation tool itself seemed like a productive and relevant way to promote principal-teacher interaction, the principal-directed nature of the related communications did not allow for meaningful teacher involvement. Teachers were rarely given any opportunity to engage in discussion about the causes and effects of their observed behavior. A helpful discussion could have ensued in which teachers and principals called attention to teacher successes and also problem-solved to get to the heart of specific student or teacher actions; as a result, teachers would have felt valued and heard, and some solutions to the issue at hand may have been generated.

Novice teachers at Smith Elementary School were negatively impacted by the micropolitical state of the school.

Schools can function best when there is stability among people and occurrences, as depicted in the graphic in Figure 4, such that the principal enacts leadership through the existing micropolitical state that has been built and nurtured over time. The situation in this case study is one in which Smith Elementary School's organizational factors and teacher characteristics lacked the stability to serve as a strong foundation for successful practices. As novice teachers were socialized into the ineffective school at Smith, their negative

experiences led to discouragement, stress, and dissatisfaction. As teachers became acculturated into the micropolitical environment at Smith, poor practices and habits were perpetuated among teachers and the cycle of ineffectuality greatly impacted teacher morale and had resulting effects on student achievement (Angelle, 2006; Kardos et al., 2001). This cycle in which school leaders like Debbie promoted fruitless perspectives and practices, had the effect of encouraging teachers to engage in similar behavior and thinking, further perpetuating learning in a flawed system. More problematic is the notion that positive and constructive practices were not being encouraged or promoted within the school community.

In some ways the various elements of the school's micropolitics can be mediated by neutralizing events, such as exchange theories (Anderson, 1991), contrived collegiality (Hargreaves, 1991), and strategic compliance (Schempp et al., 1993). Because these events and interactions can bring together both positive and negative factors to level the experience for teachers, there is the possibility that an overall neutral experience can result. For the novice teachers at Smith, they were attempting to see the bright side of their experience at Smith, such as the collegial interactions with their colleagues and the fact that they were making an important impact on the students in their classrooms. These important elements of the school's micropolitics were influential in allowing this group of teachers to see past the school's negative micropolitics and encouraged them to remain at the school at least for the near future.

Despite the negative micropolitical environment at Smith Elementary School, novice teacher retention was relatively high.

Despite the complex and multifaceted nature of the micropolitical environment at Smith, teachers were forthcoming about their immediate and long-term career pursuits to remain at Smith. Although there was an overwhelming amount of data that pointed to a negative micropolitical environment at Smith, the retention rate in recent years has been on the average to high end. Teachers asserted that there were various reasons they would leave the profession, including the excessive demands of the job, the lack of appropriate professional learning experiences, and lack of autonomy or professional respect, but that they intend to remain at the school for the next few years. Some of their reasons for wanting to stay at Smith included their heartfelt desire to make a difference for children, their need to gain experience at their grade level and within one setting, and an allegiance to the relationships they have developed with colleagues. Although not explicitly discussed by the teachers in the study, Debbie commented that the economy often has a role to play in teachers' decision about whether to stay in or leave a school. My sense is that the state of the job market and the economy was likely an underlying factor in the teachers' reasoning. The positive news for Smith Elementary School was that the low to average turnover rates meant that this mid-poverty school had the chance for student success purely due to stability in staffing. This would contrast with Smith and Ingersoll's (2004) finding that school poverty level was one of the highest predictors of whether a teacher would stay or leave teaching, particularly after their first year.

There are various alternative explanations for this phenomenon of high retention in a seemingly poor micropolitical environment, one being that novice teachers are in an adjustment period where their experiences and perceptions are partially colored by their amateur status. It was inevitable that the complicated arrangement of school variables

being juggled by the principal would have an effect on novice teachers at Smith Elementary School, especially as they attempted to understand and function within a new and unfamiliar micropolitical environment. Another possible explanation involves the immense stress and pressure that comes along with being a new teacher facing a unique and ever-changing situation. The learning curve in a teaching career can be rather steep for beginners and by looking outward for assistance and support, new teachers may feel that the challenges they experience should be handled by their school administrators. Because it may be convenient for teachers to blame some of their central problems on the principal, the findings presented in this case study appeared to offer a sympathetic view of the novice teacher's experience when in actuality the issues they face may simply be the reality of the profession. Furthermore, the reality of the principal's role and the immense responsibilities being shouldered by school leaders may have been underestimated in the depiction of the study's findings.

Implications for Practice

Throughout Chapter IV, the findings that were described alluded to ways in which school and district practices were effective and non-effective. There were also plenty of examples of ways that the principal was failing to enhance the micropolitical state of Smith Elementary School; through these non-examples, readers are able to develop their own understandings about what successful practices look like and how the knowledge gained can be applied to their own settings. The unique thing about school micropolitics is that the events, interactions, and processes that occur in one school will never be identical to those of another school. As a result, a general understanding about the types of structures that principals put into place and the types of behavior that they engage in will help other

administrators to either follow their example or to steer away from certain non-productive behaviors or activities. In all cases, it is essential for school principals to become reflective about their individual practices so that they will be in a position to measure their own success according to what is read in a study like this one. As a result of this study, some key points were revealed that can help all school principals to develop or improve their own micropolitical setting.

Clear Vision

Principals who develop a clear personal vision, and then engage teachers and other staff members in creating a school vision will garner support and engender trust within the school community. Teachers need to feel that they are involved and invested in the process of generating the vision so that the words will not only be a slogan, but can turn into meaningful action in their daily practices. The act of creating a school vision is proactive rather than reactive, allowing professionals to engage in conversation and planning about the priorities and practices that are necessary for success with their unique population of learners. Further, the vision must take into account the needs of all members of the school community, presenting a set of clear, aligned goals for success of students, parents, support staff, teachers, and administrators.

Solid Instructional Goals

Principals must have a clear understanding about research-based best practices for instruction, especially as applied to the population of learners in their own setting. Particularly at the elementary school level, principals need to have a solid sense of what quality pedagogy looks like and need to be knowledgeable about current instructional methods and priorities being used throughout their district, state, and nation. Given the fact

that many novice teachers are experiencing a disconnect between their teacher preparation experience and their initial teaching experience, it is important for principals to gain knowledge about the types of practices and techniques that are being promoted in teacher preparation programs and bridge the gap for teachers as they enter the profession.

By participating in professional development opportunities, visiting other schools, seeking expert advice, and attending conferences, principals can build their own capacity to understand and enact instructional guidance at the school level. This goes beyond simply selecting rigorous and effective curricular programs or resources and turning them over to teachers, but in actually developing the knowledge and skill set to support teachers through the adoption and implementation of those programs. A principal who selects programs and resources in line with the school vision will be better able to justify the decisions and ensure that they are not jumping on a bandwagon, but truly making choices that will support teacher and student growth. Moreover, principals who engage in collaboration with teachers as they learn together about new instructional initiatives will be more likely to have success as those programs and practices are adopted.

Shared Leadership

Teachers and students are better served by a principal who shares leadership with and among teachers. By dispersing decision-making authority among the staff, a principal can engender trust and demonstrate openness to new ideas. This not only takes the pressure off the principal to be wholly responsible for all decisions made at the school level, but involves the people who are on the front lines and have valuable input on choices that directly impact them and the work they do. A principal who shares leadership with teachers will likely minimize conflict, rather than create it. While the notion of

surrendering control is at many times a challenge for principals who are accustomed to a more top-down approach to decision-making, the benefits of allowing a bottom-up approach to take hold are immense. Shared leadership is easier said than done and involves a genuine effort on the part of the principal to listen to teachers, allow them autonomy in their professional decision-making, and recognize the strengths that exist within the human capital at the school.

Collegiality

In order to be successful, principals must build the expectation and structures so that a collegial environment is in place for teachers to collaborate toward the school vision and instructional goals of the school. A critical area for retaining excellent teachers is the restructuring of school organizations and teaching work, including a reallocation of personnel and resources so that teachers have time to work intensively with students and collaboratively with each other (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). Principals can do this by engaging with teachers in meaningful ways rather than focusing only on procedural tasks. By fostering teacher-teacher interactions that center around instructional improvement for teachers and students, principals can signal their support and investment in the school goals. More importantly, teachers need to see the principal as a strong instructional leader that possesses the knowledge and skills to learn, teach, and share alongside them. By promoting positive teacher-principal interactions that revolve around classroom practices, principals can minimize the hierarchical relations within the school.

Some suggested activities that could promote collegiality at the school level include the formation of interdisciplinary teaching teams, providing teachers with common planning time, involving staff in school-wide problem solving, and fostering action-based

or cooperative learning. In many schools, the creation of professional learning communities has been one source of success as leaders attempt to develop structures that support shared leadership and involve teachers in their own meaningful learning. By moving toward their common purpose, teachers and administrators can become involved in shared and continuous learning experiences that allow for problem-solving and sharing strategies for success. A professional learning community takes the onus off the principal to be the holder of all knowledge, and allows him or her to engage in an authentic learning experience where theory and practice are merged. Wenger (2006) defines a community of practice as a group of people who engage in a process of collective learning, or “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (p. 1). Moreover, schools with these initiatives in place tend to exhibit lower teacher turnover regardless of the student body being served, in large part because teachers are given the opportunity to be successful and to fully engage in the craft of teaching (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999).

In order for principals to attain the proper skills that will set them up for a successful administrative experience, there must be concerted efforts to align administrator preparation programs to meet the needs and realities of the schools they will lead. Programs should focus on the critical skills needed by administrators: setting a clear, aligned vision for success; engaging in productive interpersonal relations with staff members; shared leadership; and building collegial learning environments for staff. These are among some of the essential elements of a positive micropolitical environment and one that not only supports teachers as they enter the profession, but engages teachers at all stages of their career. Beyond the administrator preparation stage, principals need to be

engaged in professional development activities that highlight their role in supporting novice teachers and in developing a positive micropolitical environment in which to foster teacher growth and collaboration.

Implications for Policy

“It is clear that the role of the principal is paramount in any endeavor to change pedagogical practice, adopt new curricula, reshape the school’s culture and climate, or take on other improvement targets,” (Hord & Sommers, 2008). Unfortunately, principals cannot make these changes singlehandedly, although many believe they could and may even make attempts to do so. In order for practices to change, policies must be enacted and adapted in ways that support the current needs and realities of public schools.

There must be an effort to ensure that school principals are evaluated in such a way that the micropolitical state of their school is reflected in the evaluation. By gaining a better understanding of the positive and negative practices that are occurring, policymakers can make decisions that reflect the realities and priorities of life in schools. Without ongoing data about the ways principals are leading their schools, particularly from the perspective of the individuals under their leadership, there is no way to measure the effectiveness and importance of school culture and principal influence over the micropolitics of a school. Some ways that data can be gathered to inform such evaluation of school leadership could be by asking for teacher input as in a 360-degree model of evaluation, or by having outside researchers regularly assess the quality of systems and structures within a school. The valuable information that can be gathered through such approaches can help to determine whether and what positive micropolitical practices are occurring.

Policy can be enacted to ensure that schools and districts are required to offer a certain degree and quality of support to new teachers. The variability in induction and mentoring programs for novice teachers, and the subsequent support systems for other teachers, points to the need for research-based and systematic programs and practices that can introduce constant and stable sources of support for teachers at all stages of the professional continuum. A goal in designing and enacting policies around induction and mentoring programs should be to include monitoring and follow-up, not as a bureaucratic mechanism, but as a way to ensure that novice teachers and administrators feel that these programs are meeting their needs and objectives. Moreover, the inclusion of professional learning communities in all schools will support the goals of a positive micropolitical environment and will set teachers and administrators up for successful collegial experiences.

There must also be concerted efforts to evaluate staffing mechanisms in schools and districts to ensure that hiring decisions are made in ways that support novice teachers' needs as well as school needs. The ability of a principal to hire effective teachers in a timely manner is integral to the success of novice teachers as they enter the profession. Selection and hiring practices must allow for alignment of a school's vision with the needs of the school and with the traits of teacher candidates. By taking a human capital approach to this issue, practitioners can persuade policymakers about the importance of selecting the right people at the right time so that proper support and guidance can be offered as teachers begin their career. Because hiring systems and processes cannot change overnight, it is essential that distinct supports are made available to novice teachers who are hired at different times of the school year, or who may come from varied preparation routes. By

recognizing the unique characteristics of different types of teachers entering the profession, strategies can be used to support these teachers at all stages of their career. Just as Darling-Hammond and Berry (1999) suggested, there need to be thoughtful, sustained, and systemic approaches to teacher recruitment, development, and support in order for novice teachers to be successful in the classroom and satisfied with the profession.

Recommendations for Future Research

Since micropolitical theory is broad and encompasses many aspects of interpersonal behavior and events within a specified context, the application to a school setting narrowed the focus in an important way. This study focused on the micropolitics of an elementary school and the impact that the micropolitics had on the issue of teacher retention. While the data and findings that were produced through this study are meaningful and can contribute some important information to the field, the study also generated some other musings and ideas for future research.

Since the conclusions from this case study largely painted a picture of a school with a negative micropolitical environment, it would be useful and enlightening to study a school with more elements of positive micropolitics. Although it may be a challenge to seek a school with vastly positive micropolitical leanings from the outset of the study, it would be interesting to study several schools in one district and conduct a comparative case study of the varied micropolitical factors that are evidenced. Through a study of multiple schools, it is likely that more positive factors would be revealed and that conclusions could be made about the ways that school principals and teachers function within a positive micropolitical setting.

A study of this nature would not necessarily need to be linked to the topic of teacher retention, but would be interesting to determine whether such a connection exists. By studying a school with positive micropolitics, researchers and practitioners would be able to use the assets-based approach to understand why certain activities or practices are more effectual and productive in schools. The lessons learned through a study of this type would serve as a model of effective practices and would give school principals something specific to strive for. Overall, the confidence that is generated by evaluating a school and talking about the good that is occurring has the potential for an overall, positive and cyclic effect on all members of the school community, thus perpetuating the positive micropolitics.

In addition to a study of multiple schools, the work described in this dissertation could be expanded to include a case study within a different context. Because an elementary school was selected for this study, it would be interesting to assess the micropolitics of a middle school or a high school, or even a different type of elementary school. With a multitude of variables at play in each and every school, and with the complex nature of the theory of micropolitics, it is inevitable that any subsequent study of a school's micropolitics would result in different, but meaningful and useful findings. Furthermore, in a future study of the micropolitics of schools, it would be useful to talk to all teachers in a school, not only the novice teachers. By understanding the long-term effects of the micropolitical state of the school upon a veteran teacher, and contrasting that perspective with the view of a novice teacher, a researcher could generate some interesting findings. In this way, a researcher could assess the impact of micropolitics on the entire school community.

Finally, the conclusions that were made in this case study were based on one particular school, but as Ingersoll (2004b) contended, the issue of teacher retention will not be fully understood until a large-scale quantitative study is conducted to assess the comprehensive nature of teacher retention across districts, states, and the nation. I would further his point and assert that by developing a quantitative study design in which school micropolitics could be studied in a systematic way, important data could be gathered as a starting point for discussions about the characteristics of effective and not so effective schools.

Furthermore, micropolitical theory was used in the design and development of this study, as a theoretical framework is intended to guide the researcher through the process. In addition, I developed an operational definition of micropolitical theory and applied those tenets to the case data during the analysis phase of the study. Other researchers may consider using this novel approach to micropolitical theory as an analysis tool in future research on schools or other similar organizations.

Significance of the Research

The case study described here does not intend to solve the myriad issues plaguing public schools. It does not even intend to solve the issue of teacher retention in its entirety. The study does, however, aim to draw attention to the fact that the role of administrators has been largely overlooked in designing solutions to the retention problem. Despite the indication that positive and collaborative micropolitical contexts serve schools and their stakeholders well, there has been substantial evidence to the contrary over the years and this case study is further evidence of the way that negative micropolitics impact teachers and schools, yet do not make a big difference in the overall retention rates.

The hope is that this study points to the need for attention to micropolitical issues in schools. By understanding better about how school leaders act and interact in ways that affect their novice teachers, leadership practices can be improved, leadership preparation can be improved, and teacher preparation can be improved. As educators gain more knowledge about the interpersonal relations between school community members, and seek productive ways to manage those relationships, principals will be in a better position to offer structures and supports that best suit teachers' needs. School principals can help to develop and foster strong teachers, who in turn can develop strong learners in their classrooms. Since student achievement is the ultimate goal for public school systems in America, it is essential that the element of human capital is valued and cultivated in such a way that all stakeholders can proceed toward that goal.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Focus Group Questions

I want you to think about your beginning experiences as a teacher. If you are currently in your first year of teaching, I want you to try to focus on this, your first year, and how you have felt during this time. If you are in your second or third years, try to think back to your first year, but you can describe your experiences from any of the years.

- Describe the culture of your school. (CPW, CN, POG, SVG, PO, RP, CR, CD, DSC)
- Have you been involved in any type induction and/or mentoring program? If so, please describe. (TTI, ME, IL, PPO)
- What are some of the activities that happen at this school that are aimed at supporting/ mentoring new teachers? How much time is spent weekly/ monthly in these activities? (TTI, ME, IL, PPO)
- What satisfies you about being a teacher? In what areas do you feel successful? (MRI, TPSI, TM, TA)
- What are some barriers to your success as a teacher? What support do you have to meet the challenges that you face? (BC, CS, PS, DI, ET)
- How much control do you think you have over the successes or barriers you have experienced? (SDM, TDDM, CPW, PO)
- How would you describe the principal at your school? What type of interactions do you generally have with your principal? (FPS, PNO, TR, OP, PP, LPP)

- What are the primary activities you see the principal being involved in each day?
(PP, LPP, MT, IL)
- How are you evaluated by your principal? Formally and informally? (EI, EF)
- What type of support do you get from colleagues, if any? (TTI, CL, CPW, CP)
- How does teaching compare to your expectations? (TPSI, TM)
- Do you think of teaching as a lifelong career choice? (TPSI, TM)
- What would it take to keep you in this profession? (TPSI, TM)
- What might make you leave the profession? (TPSI, TM)
- What advice would you give other new teachers that would help them to be successful as beginning teachers? (TTI, TPSI, TM)

Individual Interview Protocol and Questions-Teachers

I want you to think about your beginning experiences as a teacher. If you are currently in your first year of teaching, I want you to try to focus on this, your first year, and how you have felt during this time. If you are in your second or third years, try to think back to your first year, but you can describe your experiences from any of the years.

- Tell me how you made the decision to become teacher. What drew you to this role in education? (TTI, TPSI, TM)
- Describe your experience as a teacher. Tell me about a typical day and some of the activities you engage in. (FSB, BSB, ME, RP, DSC)
- What satisfies you about being a teacher? In what areas do you feel successful? What makes you want to come to school each day? (MRI, TPSI, TM, TA)
- What are some barriers to your success as a teacher? What support do you have to meet the challenges that you face? (BC, CS, PS, DI, ET)
- How would you characterize your principal in terms of his or her ability to lead the school? Would you describe the principal as an instructional leader or a manager? What type of individual or group interactions do you generally have with your principal? (PP, LPP, MT, IL, BC, CS, CPW, PO, PNO, PTO)
- How would you rate your level of satisfaction as a new teacher? (MRI, TPSI, TM, TA)
- Do you plan to remain at this school next year? If not, do you plan to remain in teaching? (TPSI, TM)
- What factors are involved in your decision to stay or leave teaching? (TPSI, TM)

Individual Interview Protocol and Questions-Principals

I want you to think about your experiences as a school principal and the role you play in your school, particularly with respect to the teachers.

- Tell me how you made the decision to become an administrator. What drew you to this role in education? (TTI, TPSI, TM)
- Describe your experience now as an administrator. Tell me about a typical day and some of the activities you engage in. How would you say your time is divided between various types of activities such as management versus instructional tasks? (FSB, BSB, ME, RP, DSC, MT, IL)
- Describe the culture of your school. (CPW, CN, POG, SVG, PO, RP, CR, CD, DSC)
- Describe the type of induction and/or mentoring program that the new teachers in your school are involved in. How much time do teachers spend weekly/ monthly in these activities? (TTI, ME, IL, PPO)
- What type of interactions do you generally have with your teachers? (FPS, PNO, TR, OP, PP, LPP)
- What types of instructional leadership do you engage in? (IL, EF, EI, CL, SDM, CPW, CP)
- How do you evaluate the performance of your teachers? Formally and informally? (EI, EF)

- How would you rate the satisfaction of the staff at your school? (MRI, TPSI, TM, TA, TR, OP)
- How are your school's retention rates for new teachers? (TPSI, TM)
- What effects has the retention rate had on the school and on the teachers? (CN, POG, SVG, TM, PS, DSC)
- What satisfies you about being a school administrator? In what areas do you feel successful? What makes you want to come to school each day? (MRI, TPSI, TM, TA)
- What are some barriers to your success as an administrator? What support do you have to meet the challenges that you face? (BC, CS, PS, DI, ET, IL, MT)
- What would help you to be a more successful and more effective administrator? (PRO)

APPENDIX B

INITIAL SET OF RESEARCH-BASED CATEGORIES

FSB: front stage behaviors	BSB: back stage behaviors
EI: evaluation-informal	EF: evaluation-formal
TTI: teacher-teacher interactions	
ME: meetings	
	ET: exchange theories
CL: Collaboration	CN: Control
SDM: Shared decision-making	TDDM: Top-down decision-making
CPW: Collegiality (power-with)	PO: Power-over (authority; influence)
	CCC: Contrived collegiality/ conformity
CN: Collective norms	RP: Rules/procedures
POG: Pursuit of organizational goals	SC: Strategic compliance
CP: Cooperation	CF: Conflict
PNO: Person-oriented	PTO: Position-oriented
SVG: Shared values/goals	DI: Diversity of interests
TR: Trust	FPS: Formal power structure/ hierarchy
TPSI: Teacher professional self-identity	PS: Praxis shock
TM: Teacher motivation	DSC: Dominant school culture
TA: Teacher autonomy	BC: Bureaucratic controls
OP: Openness	BN: Boundaries
IL: Instructional leadership	MT: Management tasks
MRI: Moral influence	MTI: Material interests
PP: Physical presence/ responsiveness of principal	LPP: Lack of physical presence
CR: Communication-respect/authenticity	CD: Communication-directives/coercion
PPO: Participation/opportunities	CS: Control/sanctions

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